

DOWNIE 193031

Bandwagon



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

January-February 1976



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Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Editor

Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

Our cover this issue is dedicated to Karl Wallenda, who will be performing in 1976 for the 48th year in the American circus, longer than any active circus star.

The Wallenda Family came originally from Mannheim, Germany. At the age of 18, in 1923, Karl visualized a high wire act with two men standing on the wire with a third doing a handstand on their heads. Karl did the handstand with brother Herman as one of the understanders and Joe Geiger as the other. Karl married Helen Kreis and she brought the act up to four people. Joe and Herman walked out on the wire with a shoulder pole, Karl would sit in a chair balancing on the pole and Helen balanced on his shoulders. This act went over big as a headliner at the Berlin Wintergarten. In Europe the act were forced to work over a net.

The Wallendas were scouted by Ringling Barnum agent Pat Valdo who booked them on the Greatest Show On Earth for the 1928 season. They remained as a feature of the big show for many years, and returned to Ringling Barnum in the 1940s. They were performing with the big show in 1944 and were on the wire 40 feet in the air when the

word "fire" rang out, in Hartford, Connecticut.

In 1947 Karl Wallenda organized the Wallenda Circus, playing ballparks. In recent years in association with Jack Leoncini he has produced a number of outstanding Shrine circuses. Our hat is off to Karl Wallenda, a great living circus star performer.

NEW MEMBERS NEEDED

The Circus Historical Society can only grow when its membership is increased. If you know of an individual that would enjoy receiving the BANDWAGON invite them to join. Applications are available from the Secretary-Treasurer, Edward L. Jones, 800 Richey Rd., Zanesville, Ohio 43705 or from the BANDWAGON office.

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BANDWAGON PUBLICATION DATE

Each issue of the BANDWAGON is usually mailed near the end of the second month shown on the cover.

The November-December issue was mailed on December 20, 1975. Due to the postal service handling of bulk mail it was not received by some until early January 1976. Please do not be alarmed if you do not receive your copy within the dated months. Allow a few weeks into the following month.

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Ringling-Barnum	1955	hardback	\$ 3.00

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Ringling-Barnum	1951		\$ 3.50
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Ringling-Barnum	1956		\$ 3.00
Ringling-Barnum	1962		\$ 2.00
Ringling-Barnum	1975 (red)		\$ 2.50
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LITHOS

Cole Bros.	Hippo in Cage	1941	1 sheet	\$10.00
Cole Bros.	Elephant act	1941	1 sheet	\$12.50
Ringling-Barnum	Monkeys, circus	1945	½ sheet	\$ 7.50
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DOWNIE BRO'S WILD ANIMAL CIRCUS

THE LARGEST MOTOR CIRCUS IN THE WORLD



Part II, The 1930-1931 Seasons.

By Joseph T. Bradbury

The 1930 Season

In early January 1930 the new wood-working shop at Havre de Grace quarters which had been equipped with the latest power machinery got into operation building new truck bodies and repairing old ones. Work progressed rapidly and by February 1 almost all of the parade trucks had been thru the repair shops. Several new truck bodies were built in Milford, Del. at the Wallace Burns body building shop and George LaFrance and William McNeill drove three truck chassis from quarters in late January to have the first order of new bodies mounted on them. Two lions were born in quarters giving the show a total of three cubs in the menagerie.

The Feb. 22, 1930 Billboard said that Downie's advance would have four country route trucks and one big supply car fitted with an office for the manager, paper lockers, and a small boiler for making paste. A truck mechanic with tools would be a part of the advance crew. Clyde H. Williard was named advance manager and by mid February all of the vehicles had been thru the carpenter and paint shops and been equipped with 1930 license plates.

Downie advertised in the Mar. 1, 1930

Downie Bros. motor vehicles lined up in Central City Park, Macon, Ga. quarters winter of 1930-31. Penned on back of this original photo by a commercial photographer was "Half of Downie Bros. visitors

Billboard wanting, "Attractions for side-show, wild west people for concert, two good experienced Chevrolet mechanics, good producing clown. For Sale, two male lions, polar bear, or will trade for any other animal we can use."

In early March Jerome T. Harriman was named general agent. He had been on Floyd and Howard King's Cole Bros. Circus in 1929. The March 8, 1930 Billboard said that Manager James Heron and Harriman had gone on a prospecting tour of territory to play during the coming season. In addition to five trucks the advance would also use two sedans.

In mid March Rodney Harris was signed as band director with 12 pieces and his wife, Ella, would be prima donna.

The March 22, 1930 Billboard announced that Charles Sparks had again purchased Downie Bros. and quoted him that all contracts made by the former owner would be fulfilled. Sparks said he would personally operate the show. This switching back and forth of the ownership inspired Charles Wirth to write in Sawdust and Spangles column of The Billboard as follows.

"The Downie Bros. Circus has become sort of a rubber ball. Just about a year ago Andrew Downie 'bounced' it to Charles Sparks and a few days later for some reason

that has not become known, Sparks 'bounced' it back to Downie. The latest is that Downie has 'bounced' it to Sparks again. Everyone personally acquainted with Charles Sparks felt certain that he was not through with the circus business. He dearly loves the circus and the fact that his own show, the Sparks Circus, passed out of his hands so suddenly and went into hands other than the ones he expected, seemed to be having some effect upon him in the way of 'circus sickness' or aching to toss his hat back in the ring. Now that his hat has reached that point again, we feel sure that he is happy once more and just rarin to go."

(Note. Sparks sold his 20 car railroad circus to H. B. Gentry following the 1928 season. It turned out that Gentry had merely been acting as agent for the American Circus Corporation (Jerry Mugivan, Bert Bowers, Edward Ballard) and when Sparks learned the truth he was greatly upset as he had previously refused to sell to Mugivan and his partners.)

Downie advertised in the same Billboard, "Downie Bros. Circus Wants - sideshow manager, concert wrestler, second cook. For sale - polar bear, male and female lion, large black bear. All contracts signed by Andrew Downie or Downie Bros. Circus

caravan". Evidently the trucks were lined up this way for some kind of visitor's day shortly after the show went into Macon quarters for the first time following the 1930 season. The semis pictured are the

first used by the show and were added by Charles Sparks while it was still on the road in the fall of 1930. Photo by The Metro Studio, Macon, Ga. Pfening Collection.





Lead riders followed by the No. 1 band truck in Downie Bros. parade at Warren, R. I., July 12, 1930. Photo by John Cutler.



Clown band truck in parade at Warren, R. I., July 12, 1930. Photo by John Cutler.

will be fulfilled. Charles Sparks, Manager, Downie Bros. Circus, Havre de Grace, Md."

A week later The Billboard reported that Andrew Downie was enroute to his home in Medina, N.Y. and would later visit in Hot Springs, Ark. An advertisement in this issue read, "Downie Bros. Circus wants sideshow manager (as well as other positions). For sale - late model Tangley Calliophone complete with blower and engine."

The calliope and animals offered for sale were no doubt excess due to the purchase the previous December of animal's and equipment of the defunct Gentry Bros. Circus.

The Downie Bros. 1930 roster was as follows: Charles Sparks, prop; James Heron, manager; Jerome Harriman, general agent; Irish Horan, press agent back and supt. reserve seat tickets; Gene Enos, equestrian director; Joe Gilligan, gen. supt; Rodney Harris, musical director; Steve Roberts, supt. canvas; Muldoon Hartman, supt; commissary dept; T.O. Fremont, supt. lights; Arthur Berry, supt. pros; George Palmer, supt. ring stock; Ben L. Wells, 24 hr. agent; Fred Walker, boss carpenter; Bill Chilton, blacksmith; Clyde Willard, manager adv. car No. 1; Peck Amsden, legal adjuster. This roster which appeared in the Mar 30, 1930 Billboard also noted the show would travel on 75 cars, trucks, and trailers.

General Agent Jerome Harriman was injured when struck by an auto in Lancaster, Pa. on March 29 and had to be hospitalized for a while. It is assumed his duties during this time were taken over by his assistant, J. E. Parsons.

As incredible as it may seem, ownership of the show changed again on April 1 when Sparks sold it to James Heron. Although we have very little information on the previous purchasing and re-selling of the show we do have the details on the sale to Heron. Pur-

chase price was \$50,000, half paid at time of sale, and a note signed by Heron, dated April 1, 1930 promised to pay the balance of \$25,000 in nine months at four percent interest. Payment was to be made to Spark's account at Peoples National Bank, East Brady, Pa. (Note, the author has personally examined the original note and observed on the back the later satisfaction - "Received Payment, Charles Sparks.")

The Billboard in commenting on this latest sale said that Heron had purchased the Downie show, this being the fourth sale transaction in the last 14 months. The story recalled that in February 1929 Sparks bought the show from Downie, sold it back to him a few weeks later, in March 1930 Downie again sold the show to Sparks and after only a few days Sparks sold it to Heron.

The latest owner, who had been manager of the show for the past three seasons, continued preparation for the new season as usual and the various changes or ownership had little or no effect on this operation. The Billboard said that in early April many showfold were arriving in quarters, that Gene Enos had a new house car, Clyde Willard was pleased with the new No. 2 bill car which had been built in quarters and mounted on a new three ton truck, and final count of advance vehicles showed a supply truck, 2 sedans, and 5 billing trucks.

The show opened its fifth season at Havre de Grace, Md., April 17, 1930 and the May 3, 1930 Billboard reported it as follows. (condensed).

"DOWNIE SHOW OPENS IN DOWNPOUR OF RAIN. Opened Havre de Grace, Md. April 17. Opening in a downpour of rain the lot was a sea of mud. Attendance at both performances was satisfactory. Program is all circus, the steel arena and all wild animal acts have been eliminated. Performance is given in 3 rings. Outstanding among the acts is the Hodgini Family, sensational riding act with 5 horses, and Morales Family, featured in wire and aerial acts. All help is uninformed. Prop

men wear red suits, and ticket sellers also in uniform. Entire outfit presents a striking appearance." The performance was not reviewed in detail until later.

The show played Elkton, Md., April 18, then entered Pennsylvania the next day at Oxford. Coatesville, Lancaster, Lebanon, Columbia, and Hanover followed. After a return to Maryland, April 27, at West Minister, the show went back into the Keystone State at Waynesboro for a single stand, played Winchester, Va. April 30, Hagerstown, Md., April 31, and then it was back to Pennsylvania at Chambersburg and remained through most of May in the state.

The May 24, 1930 Billboard said that the show had enlarged since last season and had all new parade and spec wardrobe. It noted that Pedro Alburto was back after an absence of one season. Theresa Morales was slightly injured in a fall at Columbia, Pa., April 24 and Joe Hodgini had added a new truck and now uses a total of two plus his sedan to move the act. The article further observed that Milt Robbins had a fine sideshow lineup and Col. James F. Baker was in charge of the pit show featuring "Peggy From Paris" with a new and flashy bannerline. The show claimed a total of three new trucks and a sedan had been recently added. Visits had been exchanged with personnel of the Hunt and Sparks circuses playing nearby.

Downie entered Ohio at East Liverpool, May 28, and remained in the state for a total of 11 stands. Heron told a Billboard representative at Millersburg on May 30 that Ohio would be as far west as the show would go. He said that all towns in Indiana and Northern Ohio, regardless of size, had been visited by some circus already in the season. Heron remarked that business in Pennsylvania had been big with some turnaways in the immediate Pittsburgh area but that in Ohio there had been only fair



business with unseasonably cold weather a factor.

Entering West Virginia at Sistersville, June 10, the show played three stands in the state then returned to Ohio for Lisbon and Warren before moving on to Pennsylvania. Hagenbeck-Wallace was in opposition at Warren and billed heavily against Downie. Downie was scheduled for June 14 and Hagenbeck-Wallace, June 20. The larger railroad show papered the city and surrounding area with "Coming Soon" and "Wait". In contrast with this strong opposition Downie got along fine with two new motorized shows, Walter L. Main, and Al F. Wheeler which also played in eastern Ohio and Western Pennsylvania as the three agreed informally to divide up certain towns. Downie played Midland, East Liverpool, Lisbon, Ravenna, and Swickley, while Main showed in Elwood City, East Palestine, and Salem, and Wheeler played Zelionople, Burgettstown, and McDonald.

A report in the June 21, 1930 Billboard said that Heron was pleased with the final overall take on the Ohio tour and observed his show had some good matinees and a few packed night houses in the state. Irish Horan landed plenty of publicity for the show and despite the long jumps Joe Gilligan had it in and ready on time. Kit and Dot Noland, wild west team, joined and were featured in the concert along with Chief Two Arrows and Abe Berg's wrestling match. Other notes said the aftershow concert was getting top business, the Morales Family had added another wire act, working with two wires and 6 people, and Theresa was doing a sensational heel and toe catch in her trapeze number. The band, sporting new uniforms, were now using an elevated platform, and Jimmie Gallagher, banner man, broke all of his previous records at Athens, Ohio where he had the big top and parade fairly lined with banners from end to end.

Greenville, June 16, was the first stand on the return to Pennsylvania with nine dates to follow. Charles Sparks and Mr. and Mrs. Clifton Sparks visited at Broosville. Long jumps in the mountains failed to delay the show despite many detours due to road improvements.

Downie went into New Jersey at Phillipsburg, June 27, and after stands at Hackettstown, and Westwood, moved on in-

Open cage truck in parade at Warren, R. I., July 12, 1930.



THE LARGEST MOTOR CIRCUS IN THE WORLD

DOWNIE BRO'S

BIG 3 RING

WILD ANIMAL

CIRCUS

MUSEUM AND MENAGERIE

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SATURDAY, 8th
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ADMISSION 25 and 50c INCLUDING CIRCUS AND MENAGERIE

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SHOW GROUNDS NEAR OLD BALL PARK

Newspaper ad for Downie Bros. stand at Monroe, N. C., Nov. 8, 1930. Bradbury collection.

to New York with first date coming at Nyack, July 1. Newburg, Kingston, Catskill, and Hudson would complete the New York tour then it was on to Connecticut at Winstead on July 7.

The July 5, 1930 Billboard mentioned that Joe Hodgini had purchased a new 5 ton truck to carry his horses and that Peggy Waddell, female impersonator, was featured in the "Peggy From Paris" pit show managed by Col. Baker. Heron was quoted as

saying the show is doing nice business generally but had to go through the hard coal region enroute to New England and due to the bad strike played only two towns, Mt. Carmel and Lansford.

The Billboard's New York office sent a reporter to visit the show in Hackettstown, N.J. on June 28 where two performances were given to satisfactory business. The review was capped by headlines, "DOWNIE SHOW GOING GOOD. Program is excellent, equipment up to the minute, business satisfactory.

"Gene Enos blows the whistle to the best program the Downie outfit has ever offered, opening with classy tournament, which is followed by a well rendered vocal number by Ella Harris, pertaining to the Nile. Then in rapid succession was an interesting riding goat and dog number; Felix Morales on trampoline; Larkins' juggling and Satario's swinging perch; Walters Duo on the Roman rings; clown number featuring ludicrous baseball gag; single elephant acts worked by Mrs. Shuford, Ella Harris, and Mitzi; Joe and Etta Hodgini appeared in separate rings with their riding and scored decisively; Eskimo dog act worked by Anna White, Carl Clark, and Mrs. White; Morales and their sensational slides, forward foot slide by Felix; swinging ladders appearing there on Misses Shuford, Wilson, and Walters; clown number using baseball gag; White's leaping hounds; clowns in their leaps; Satario, hand balancing feats; Larkins who adroitly balance furniture; Mary Enos on the rolling globe; elephant act worked by Whitey Kline; concert announcement; goat act by Miss White, pig act by Carl Clark, goat act by Mitzi; clown's prize fight; Ella Harris, single trapeze; Walters Duo, Double traps; Miss Wilson also on the trapeze; clown walkaround; Joe Hodgini Troupe, deft and graceful bareback riders, who are the outstanding feature; pony drills by Carl Clark and Johnny White; Morales Family (6) in flashy double wire act; concert announcement; in the menage number appearing Miss Shuford, Ella Harris, and John White; clown's firecracker; two clever high perch acts worked by the Larkins and Gene and Mary Enos; Theresa Morales in sensational heel and toe catch on the flying trapeze; clown walkaround, White's bucking mule; iron-jaw number, Jamie Walters,

Downie Bros. elephants, Teddy, Babe, Tena, in parade at Warren, R. I., July 12, 1930. Photo by John Cutler.



Morales sisters, and Miss Wilson. Running time of the program is one hour and 40 minutes, three rings are used.

"Concert program includes Noble Duo in two acts, including whip cracking and impalement, Chief Two Arrows and tribe of Seneca Indians in rifle shooting, bow and arrows, and pastimes of the frontier days. Fred Alberg is wrestler."

Other review notes said that admission prices to beg show are 25 and 50 cents. The same four pole big top, 100 ft. round with three 40's is used but it has been raised 4 feet higher and permits the aerial and perch acts to be seen to better advantage. Seating is approximately 2800 and 1200 reserved and 1800 blues. There are no wild animal acts, the space formerly occupied by the wild animal arena has been given over to increased seating and improvement to the exterior. Rodney Harris has a 12 piece band and cues accurately with popular and semi classical selections. This season the band is located on an elevated platform where it appears to better advantage. There are 225 people on the payroll and the show moves on 75 vehicles.

"The parade is a daily feature and has 3 bands, Scotch bagpipers, calliope (air), 5 tableau trucks with performers on top, 10 open cage dens, 2 chariots, string of lead ponies, 2 clown carts, 2 camels, 2 elephants, total of 27 trucks and trailers. (Note the show carried three elephants, Teddy, Tena, Babe, evidently one didn't make parade that day). The public simply eats up this in popular parlance, attesting to popularity of the street parades when presented properly."

"Milt Robbins, son of Frank A. Robbins, former circus owner, has the sideshow with 15 attractions and elegant looking bannerline. Jimmy Baker's pit show has "Peggy from Paris."

Final notes said that the new office wagon looks good with Clint Shuford in charge. Mrs. James Heron is supt. of privileges and Ted Premond, in charge of lights, uses two plants.

The show's fairly good business along the Hudson wasn't up to the take the previous week. Local press in the area continued to come up with excellent after-noon notices especially on the Morales Family acts. Howard Bryant joined the Hodgini act. Joe Gilligan was said to have broken all records for efficiency in moving the show when he had all trucks at the ferry to cross the Hudson near Athens, N.Y. at midnight.

Five dates were played in Connecticut. There was close opposition with the Sparks Railroad Circus when Downie was at Winstead, July 7, 10 miles from Torrington where Sparks played the 8th. On the 8th Downie was only 20 miles away at Bristol. Both show's paper was all over the area.

Downie played a single stand in Rhode Island, July 12, at Warren, followed by a tour of Massachusetts. The show claimed excellent business on Cape Cod and at Hyannis, July 16, the Joseph P. Kennedy family was guests of the show. In all probability a future president saw the show that day. Downie was the first show to



Truck No. 31 pulling Cage No. 7 on Downie Bros. lot, season of 1930. Pfening Collection.

play Woburn, July 22, in a score of years. While in the area Irish Horan left to help general agent Harriman combat opposition in New Hampshire and Maine as the Al G. Barnes Circus had an advance billing truck in the area. Mickey Larkin of the Carl Larkin Duo had a narrow escape when his foot slipped during their carrying perch and dropped to the ground but fortunately he landed on his feet and not injured. He worked the next performance.

After a stand in Dover, N. H., July 25, Downie moved into Maine the next day at Biddeford for an extensive stay in the state. While there it ran into some very heated opposition from the Ringling owned 30 car Al G. Barnes Circus. Downie was at Calais, August 5, while the same day Barnes was across the river at St. Stephen, N.B. Other close opposition stands came at Lewiston with Downie there July 28 and Barnes, August 8; Augusta with Downie July 29 and Barnes, August 9; and Bangor with Downie August 1 and Barnes, August 6. Downie got into all towns ahead of Barnes with exception of Houlton which Barnes hit a little earlier enroute to the Maritimes. Later when Barnes returned to Maine the fierce opposition was ex-

Truck loaded with camels on Downie Bros. lot, season of 1930. Pfening Collection.



perienced. Heron filed suit against Barnes and sought damages of \$10,000 alledging that Downie bills and posters were torn down by Barnes employees and covered with the latter's paper. The author is not aware of the final outcome of the suit.

The Downie show got a very friendly reception in Maine. The state police provided the fleet with a special escort of two officers, and Gov. Gardiner, wife, and family visited the show at Augusta on July 29. Charles Sparks visited at Dover-Foxcroft on August 20.

The Aug 30, 1930 Billboard said Maine weather had been the coolest in several seasons and that Joe Hodgini had a narrow escape at Fort Fairfield, August 14, when he misjudged distance in leap from his horse and was thrown to the hippodrome track. Fortunately he received only bruises and was back the next performance. While in the area Heron left to visit Andrew Downie who was reported sick and confined to his home in Medina, N.Y.

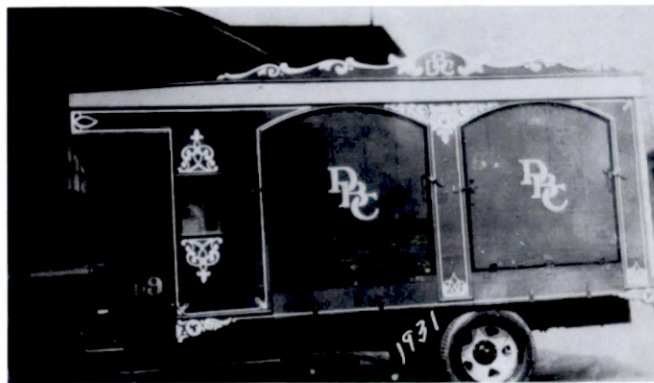
Final Maine date was at Norway, August 30, then show moved into New Hampshire at Bethel on September 1. The Billboard said the show had received much publicity in the local papers of the 32 towns it had played in Maine. The Bangor Daily News especially carried a great deal of space about the show.

Three dates were played in New Hampshire, two in Vermont, and next the show went into New York at Whitehall with three more stands to follow.

The show moved into Pennsylvania at



Freshly painted trucks lined up at Central City Park, Macon, Ga. quarters, April 1931. Included are the newly constructed cage trucks. Photo by Eddie Jackson.



Cage No. 49 at Macon, Ga. quarters, April 1931. Photo by Eddie Jackson.

Susquehanna, Sept. 11, where Charles Sparks was on the lot and witnessed good crowds at both performances. The next day at Pittston Sparks took over the show from Heron. He marked Heron's note paid in full and in all probability returned the down payment of \$25,000. The note wasn't due until Jan 1, 1931 so it was not a case of default but merely Sparks buying the show back from Heron. Heron's reason for selling is not known to the author, possibly it was either that the depression had gotten so severe he felt he better get out while he could but best guess is that Sparks, now definitely decided to get into and stay in circus business, talked Heron into selling the show back to him. At time of the sale the advance was only four days away from closing as season was scheduled to end at Easton, Pa. on October 4. Heron told The Billboard that the 1930 season had been successful for him.

When Sparks purchased the show actually it was a pretty brave deed on his part as the depression was worsening all the time with unemployment rising steadily and the spare change in the natives' pockets fast diminishing. There had already been two major circus casualties. Christy Bros. which began the season on 20 cars and later cut to 10 closed at Greeley, Colo., July 7, and returned to South Houston, Texas quarters and Floyd King's 10 car Cole Bros. Circus went broke in Scottsville, Ky, August 11. The Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West Show found the going to tough it called it a season at Prairie du Chien, Wis. on August 3. Two of John Ringling's six railroad circuses closed very early and returned to quarters, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Sept. 1 at Freeport, Ill. and John Robinson, Sept. 5, at Lincoln, Neb.

Following Pittston Downie played Berwick and Shamokin, then took off Sept. 16 to make a 212 mile jump to Dover, Del. where two performances were given the next day. Heron and his wife, who had remained a few days during the transition, left at Dover to vacation in New York City and then to visit Andrew Downie in Medina.

Sparks went to work immediately to

improve the show and remake it into his image. Several changes in personnel and many in equipment would take place in the next few weeks. Some changes in routing were made with the old closing date discarded. Sparks decided to route the show southward fast and continue into the deep south where the Downie show had never ventured before. He also planned hopefully to winter in Central City Park, Macon, Ga. as it appeared the Sparks Circus which had wintered there since 1919 would be going into quarters with Ringling-Barnum in Sarasota.

Charlie Katz was brought on to take over the front door and Sparks gave Walter Driver a rush order for new canvas, a big top, menagerie, sideshow, and larger marquee to be delivered as soon as possible. New uniforms for the band, ticket sellers, and property men were purchased as well as some wardrobe. The bandstand was decorated in new red and brown canvas and Sparks also proceeded to change the interior seating. The starbacks were discarded and replaced with reserve seat grandstand using folding chairs. How soon and by what method this was accomplished is not definitely known. The chairs were either purchased new or used and other seating equipment also purchased or built by the show's carpenter forces enroute. In any event reporters were writing about the new seating arrangement within a very short time.

With the long season planned and jumps of considerable distance to come it was necessary to improve the motor fleet. First move of Sparks was to purchase four new GMC trucks with seim trailers. In all probability these were the first for the Downie show, at least photos taken earlier do not picture any nor is there any mention in the trade publication of them. Semis were fast coming into use by motorized shows and the new Sam B. Dill Gentry Bros. Circus had taken to the road in 1930 with a large number of new GMC tractors and semi trailers. These new style vehicles were powerful, maneuvered over the road easily, and permitted individual load capacity to be considerably increased which would permit the transportation of the show on fewer units. After only a few days with the new semis the Downie management announced they had proven highly efficient in transporting the heavy loads.

Following Dover the show moved back and forth between Delaware and Maryland for the next several days and on September 30 was at Annapolis where the new marquee arrived. The run from Easton was 88 miles, including the ride across the Chesapeake Bay on two special boats. A hundred mile run to Fredricksburg, Va. came next where the new big top was set up, a 100 ft. round with three 40's. Two days later the new pit show was erected in Charlottesville. A visitor that day said the pit show had new banners and different attractions and noted that Col. Baker and Peggy Waddell were said to have left on account of illness. In any event a Peggy From Paris Show with a female impersonator wasn't in keeping with the type of attraction Sparks was accustomed to having on his midway. Frank Phillips joined after closing with the Sparks Railroad show to take charge of the Downie elephants.

Richmond, Va., October 4, was a big day with turnaway crowds at night making it the second best stand so far in the season. A Billboard reporter said the new canvas made a wonderful appearance and noted there had been much progress made in upgrading the show since Sparks took over. It was the first street parade in Richmond in several seasons and Broad street was lined with people half an hour before it was to begin.

The show entered North Carolina at Roanoke Rapids, Oct. 6, and spent the next three and a half weeks in the state.

The Oct 25, 1930 Billboard observed that Downie had been making long jumps recently and that Sparks himself was the busiest man on the lot, being up at 6 and working until midnight. Sparks was quoted as asking Joe Gilligan, master of transportation, how the show could make daily moves of 100 miles or more and get in on time, set up, and make parade before the matinee and Gilligan replied that all that was needed was lighter loads and more trucks. Sparks then made a quick trip to Macon, Ga. and picked up 3 trucks that had been used by Clifton Sparks' Florida Blossoms Co. (minstrel show) and also purchased two more. Downie was now making jumps of 80-100 miles a day which was not considered unusual. The first rain in months

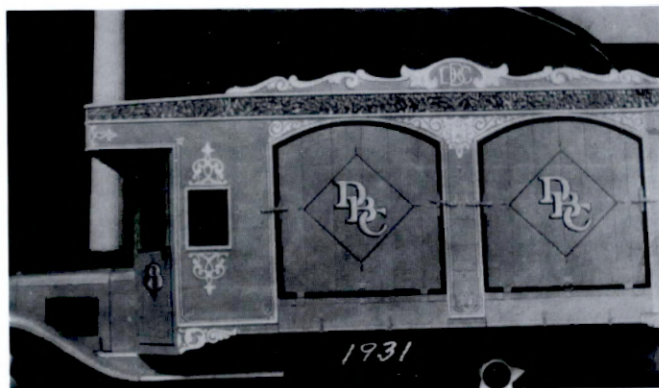
fell in Fayetteville but fortunately the new big top had been paraphrased the previous Sunday. It was reported that J. S. Kritchfield came over from the Sparks Circus to take charge of the sideshow, front door and Fletcher Smith was now on the sideshow box and was handling press back on the show. Irish Horan was ahead with press. The show played Salisbury, N.C., Oct. 24, former winterquarters of the Sparks Railroad Show and the Elks Lodge arranged a reception after the night performance. It was said the new menagerie top on order would be delivered in a week.

The following Billboard said that Downie's business continued good in North Carolina. Jimmy Heron visited at Kingston while at Wilmington the ACL Railroad headquarters discouraged it's employees from attending, advising Downie was equivalent in size to a railroad show and was afraid trucks would gradually take away the rail business of moving circuses. The 100 mile run from Kingston to Wilmington was made in good time, even the elephant truck made it in less than 3 hours. Sparks placed an order in Dunn, N.C. (not played by Downie) with a wagon company to build a new pole semi to be delivered as soon as it could be built.

The new menagerie top was delivered on schedule and Charlie Katz returned from Macon bringing additional trucks and the lift plant formerly with Clifton Spark's Florida Blossoms. Jawa Koen, who had the lights on Sparks Circus, came back with him and began making extensive repairs and improvements on the Downie lighting system.

The show entered South Carolina at Gaffney, Oct. 29, but immediately returned to North Carolina to play Gastonia, Concord, and Rockingham. William Hamilton, part owner of Barnett Bros. Circus, visited in Gaffney and Al F. Wheeler and Jethro Almond, owners of the Al F. Wheeler's New Model Shows visited at Concord. The Billboard reported that Ray Marsh Bryden joined at Hickory, N.C. as sideshow manager after closing on the William Glick Shows (carnival). It was said that with arrival of the new menagerie top and sideshow had been rearranged and new features added, including Mike and Ike, midgets. Weaver

Cage No. 8 at Macon, Ga. quarters, April 1931. Photo by Eddie Jackson.



Gray also joined the wild west aftershow troupe.

It was back into South Carolina, Nov. 3, at Lancaster where Barnett Bros. had played October 18. Two other towns also saw close competition with Barnett. Greenwood had Barnett, Nov. 1, and Downie, Nov. 15 while Laurens hosted Barnett, Nov. 6, and Downie, Nov. 14. Both show's advance was friendly and there was no "fighting" even though the business depression had made all shows scratching mighty hard for the few remaining dollars the natives had. A bad rain storm came up during the afternoon in Lancaster and continued till night making dirt roads almost impossible. A long run to Sumpter the next day, coupled with several detours, caused a late arrival and belated parade. A truck carrying Joe Hodgini's horses went into a ditch and overturned. The driver was not injured but May, one of the horses, was killed. Despite a sandy lot in Sumpter the show made remarkably quick time in setting up and getting ready to open. A truck loaded with the big top also went into a ditch enroute but a caterpillar tractor working the roads in the area pulled it out. The weather cleared at Florence, Nov. 5, but temperatures dipped to freezing. The lot at Cheraw, Nov. 8, was on the main street at the depot and the show drew well at both performances. An early arrival on Sunday in Rock Hill, Nov. 9, gave a full day to repair and repaint vehicles getting them ready for the long season in Florida. A visitor noted that the show had remodeled the sideshow by substituting all high stages. There were a lot of visitors from Barnett Bros. which was now in quarters at nearby York.

While in Spartanburg, Nov. 11, Armistice Day, the show cooperated with local authorities by permitting the American Legion parade to go first, followed by the circus parade at noon. Prof. Washington and sideshow band which had been on Barnett Bros. joined that day. The Billboard reported that a new 20 ft. stringer truck was delivered, probably from the same Dunn, N.C. firm which had built the new 26 ft. pole trailer now on the show. With the addition of these new vehicles the trucks they replaced were sent to Macon by Walter Guice and Sig Bonhomme. Road detours were quite common now. Moving from Union to Newberry, actually only 31 miles

apart, the show traveled 126 miles in detours. Arrival in Greenwood, Nov. 15, was in the rain and the fairgrounds lot was a sea of mud, but tons of straw and sawdust made it usable.

The show's journey through South Carolina over bad roads in rough weather was one the Downie personnel would not soon forget.

Pouring rain through mud and over detours to the first Georgia stand at Waynesboro caused a late arrival but parade went out on time. There were four miles of truly fearful mud roads enroute. Statesboro followed and the show reached Savannah for two days, Nov. 20-21 under auspices of Elks. Happily, from now on the show would be on nothing but paved roads.

Savannah was an eventful stand. It was the first motorized parade ever for the city which turned out for a full house the first matinee and a straw at night with second day's business also good. The show received by express two elephants under charge of Dave Masten from Peoria, Illinois. The elephants, Queen, and Pinto had been on Floyd King's Cole Bros. Circus (10 cars) which had gone broke in Scottsville, Ky. on August 12 and since then had been acquired by the proposed Ingraham-Rutherford Circus to go out of Peoria but was never able to make it. Creditors who held title to the animals sold the two elephants to Sparks who had them shipped immediately to join Downie Bros. enroute. A new semi trailer was built in Savannah to transport the newly acquired elephants in a single day and when the show departed to the next stand Queen and Pinto were part of the herd of five which also included Teddy, Babe, and Tena. Queen and Pinto were the two largest and oldest, Teddy was next in size, while Tena and Babe were still considered punks.

Chang Reynolds gives the following on the new elephants, both Asiatic females.

QUEEN, had been with Gentry Bros. Circus at least since 1917 and remained through the final 1922 season. She was with Gentry-Patterson 1923-25 and was purchased by Floyd King and John Pluto, along with the show's equipment, in the winter of 1925-26. Since then she had been on the

Cage No. 38 used to transport polar bears at Macon, Ga. quarters, April 1931. Photo by Eddie Jackson.





King ten car show titled Gentry Bros. in 1926-27, Walter L. Main in 1928, and Cole Bros. in 1929-30.

PINTO, had also been on Gentry Bros. as early as 1917 and went by the same route from then on as Queen.

Also while in Savannah Walter Guice and Eddie Jackson came from Macon with more trucks and returned with some of those discarded. Sparks continued the rapid improvement of his motorized equipment.

Although virtually every other circus had closed with exception of Sam B. Dill's Gentry Bros. Sparks took his new Downie Bros. further south into Florida after the final Georgia stand in Brunswick with first date in the Sunshine State coming at Palatka, November 24. Enroute to Brunswick the cookhouse truck had a blowout and went over an embankment causing injuries to two waiters asleep in the vehicle. They had to be hospitalized and the truck body was badly damaged. The frozen custard truck, privately owned, also went into a ditch enroute and was late in arriving.

Cold weather hit at Gainesville and Leesburg and was typical New England type when the show had Thanksgiving turkey dinner on the lot at Orlando, Nov. 29. Two days in Tampa under Shrine auspices came next and it was big business in continued cold weather the first day with temperature moderating some the second. A run to St. Petersburg was over the new six mile bridge. All through the bay area the show got splendid newspaper coverage. Downie was the first motorized circus ever in Sarasota, arriving after a 85 mile run from Lakeland. Tents were erected across from the new ACL depot and the parade went through

Newly built semi for transporting elephants at Macon, Ga. quarters, April 1931. Photo by Eddie Jackson.

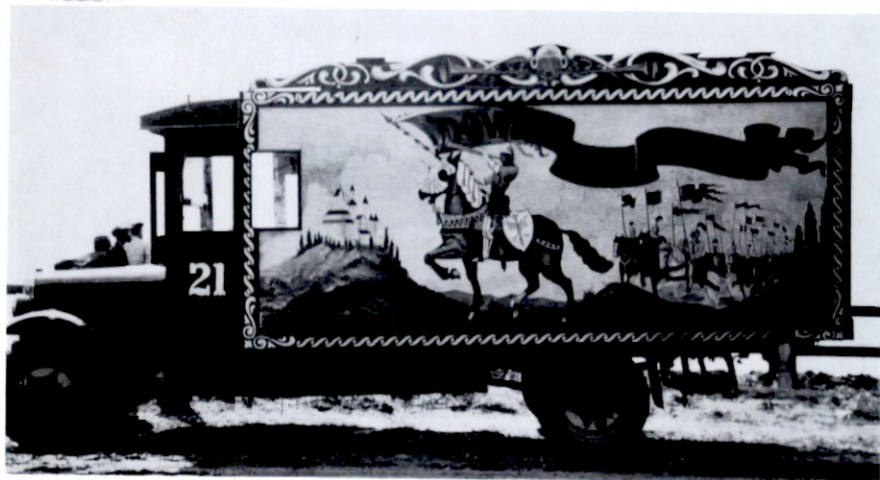
the business district at noon. By then the weather had warmed and by time the show left Sarasota it was great, typical Florida winter weather. Between shows Downie personnel visited Ringling-Barnum and Sparks Railroad Circus quarters and Mr. and Mrs. Sparks had a visit with John Ringling. Jake Posey, boss hostler of Sparks Circus, caught the Downie parade in Sarasota and talking with Mr. Sparks he said, "It was a great parade all right, Charlie, but you need an eight horse bandwagon team to lead it off."

A Billboard reporter visiting the lot said that he noted a new cookhouse semi which had been delivered in Leesburg and also observed that the sideshow, menagerie, and big top now moves with new tractors and semi trailers.

After playing Wauchula, Arcadia, and Fort Pierce the show made a long Sunday run to Miami for a three day stand, Dec. 8-10, under auspices of Miami Arcadia Club. Cold weather returned but there were good crowds at every performance. A great publicity gag occurred when the camels were taken to the beach being ridden by noted local beauties. The Miami Daily News gave it a big play.

Ernest Haag visited at Miami and H. B.

Tableau No. 21 was used as the No. 1 band truck in the 1931 street parade. The full side painting by Ernest Gosch is a replica of the famous art work, "The Crusader". Pfening Collection.



and Will Gentry the next day in Ft. Lauderdale. The show was at West Palm Beach, Dec. 12-13, and on the latter day, Sam B. Dill's Gentry Bros. finally closed for the season on the Pacific Coast, leaving Downie the only show of any consequence still out. Next came a long Sunday run of 190 miles to Daytona Beach. To lighten the loads for the long drive the elephants, camels, and Hodgini horses were shipped by rail, but the "funny ford" was driven overland. Despite the long run the show arrived early and everything was up by noon. Enroute to St. Augustine the following day Carl Clark's living car was completely wrecked.

Two days at Jacksonville saw weather cold enough for overcoats and motorized street parade a novelty. The show was on the lot in Jacksonville Dec. 17 when the sad news arrived that Andrew Downie McPhee died that day in Medina, N.Y. at the age of 67. Funeral services were held Dec. 20 at St. John's Episcopal Church in Medina with Masonic services and burial in Boxwood Cemetery. The founder of Downie Bros. Circus was now gone. He was well liked by the many on the show who had known and worked for him and it was a sad day on the Downie lot when the news of his passing was received.

While in Jacksonville another new semi from Dunn, N. C. was received.

The show was at Lake City, Dec. 19, then moved into Georgia where at Tifton, Dec. 20, the long 1930 season finally came to an end. In the meantime Sparks had made arrangements to winter the show at Central City Park in Macon, Georgia so it moved there immediately after the season's close. Sparks' home was in Macon and he had wintered his railroad show there since the winter of 1919-20 until he sold it in December 1928. The American Circus Corporation and later John Ringling, owners of the show, continued to winter in Macon, however following the 1930 season Ringling decided to bring the Sparks 20 car show into quarters in Sarasota with Ringling-Barnum, consequently leaving the Macon quarters vacated.

Despite the depression which had dealt some rough blows to many circuses in 1930 the season ended on a successful note for Charlie Sparks and his Downie Bros. Circus. The late season tour had proved to be a wise decision. In spite of some rough traveling at times, bad weather, and mediocre business in spots, there were enough big days to put the show well into the black. Sparks, since the day he purchased the show, began spending money upgrading it. He would spend a great deal more during the coming winter. The new semis were a great aid in moving the show. Exact number that were on the show at close of the 1930 season is not known to the author however there were probably at least a dozen.

The 1931 Season

The carpenter and paint shops opened in January and both would have a major job ahead of them before the new season

opened. The biggest project would be the construction of at least 7 new double-den type cages. Some reports say there were 8 and if a new den was built for the sideshow fighting lion act then that number would be correct. Several reviewers mentioned there were 14 dens in the menagerie but this meant a total of only 7 separate vehicles but 14 different compartments for animals. The cabs of the trucks were custom built and provided room for a bunk and small living space for the driver when not behind the wheel. It became customary for virtually all of the Downie trucks to have this type of cab, even for the tractors which pulled the semis. Three new semis were acquired, two for elephants and one for horses lead stock. In all probability the body work was done in the quarters shops. A special project was the construction of a new No. 1 band truck. Actually it appears the motor, cab, and chassis of the old one was used but the sides were somewhat remodeled and a beautiful replica of the famous painting, The Crusaders, was executed by Erwin Gosch who had charge of the decorating and lettering of the vehicles. It was a beautiful No. 1 band truck and drew many compliments throughout the season.

The Jan. 24, 1931 Billboard said that Charlie Sparks was at quarters every day, Clint Shuford was running the office, and about 30 people in all were on hand. Frank Phillips was breaking new animals (probably the sideshow fighting lion), John White was breaking in some more high leaping greyhounds and would have a new act. A black leopard had died a week ago.

In late January Jerome Harriman, general agent, attended a meeting in Washington, D. C. with other motorized show representatives to form a Fair Trade Practices Agreement. In had been called by Al F. Wheeler in an effort to eliminate unfair practices. CFA was cooperating and Melvin D. Hildreth, chairman of the legislative committee, was in attendance. For some time Hildreth had been working with various motor show owners during Congressional hearings as the various government agencies were working out rules and regulations for highway transport in general.

Tableau truck No. 15 had a beautiful western scene painting on it's sides. Is shown here at Macon, Ga. quarters, April 1931. Photo by Eddie Jackson.



Downie Bros. one sheet flat was designed to feature the revival of the old-time leaps, season of 1931. Pfening Collection.

The great increase in motor traffic, especially commercial trucks, had made it necessary that such regulations be enacted and Hildreth and the various show owners were on hand to see that circuses and other overland travelling amusements got a fair shake.

In Mid-February Frank McGuyre, formerly of Mighty Haag Circus, was named as Downie's legal adjuster, and Fred C. Kilgore, for the past two seasons general agent of Haag, was appointed contracting agent. G. M. Ingalls wrote The Billboard from Macon, "They are practically rebuilding the show and will have a new set of cages on new trucks. Everything is being painted." Other reports said the show was being rebuilt from front to back. When the new season opened Sparks would be in command of his kind of circus.

The March 7, 1931 Billboard reported that Downie Bros. Circus was being incorporated under a charter issued by Superior Court in Macon. Minimum capital was \$50,000 and maximum \$500,000. All capital stock was owned by Sparks and his wife, Ada (Addy). The same article said

that the show had received a large camel, Merritt Bellew had nearly finished his 8 horse liberty act using Kentucky thoroughbreds, 4 blacks and 4 sorrells, Leroy (Corky) Williams, in charge of the paintshops, had turned out some splendid work on the advertising vehicles and was now painting the new menagerie cages.

The March 28, 1931 Billboard said that beautiful weather in Macon and made it possible to work outside for last two weeks. Merritt Bellew and John White had the stock working in open air rings, and a new set of trappings for the liberty act had arrived from Cincinnati. The report said that three new GMC trucks with 25 ft. semis would be used to transport elephants and horses and would make a total of 17 large semis now on the show. Rest of the tableau, cages, and baggage trucks would be on 1½ ton vehicles. Although no definite figures were given there were about 40 show owned vehicles plus a goodly number of privately owned autos and house trailers in the circus convoys.

Announcement was made that Rodney Harris would return as bandleader and

Tableau truck No. 61 at Macon, Ga. quarters, April 1931, Photo by Eddie Jackson.





Downie Bros. advertising Car No. 1, season of 1931. Pfening Collection.

Gene Enos would be back for his fifth season as equestrian director. There would be all new and brilliant spec and parade wardrobe selected by Mrs. Sparks, who also designed three floats for the parade. T. W. Ballengeer, formerly with the Sparks Railroad Circus, was named general agent, and Clyde Willard would be in charge of the bill crew, using 3 trucks on the routes and a 5 ton town truck.

Opening date was set for Macon, April 16, under auspices of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. The official "call" advertisement was printed in the April 4, 1931 Billboard advising all people engaged with Downie Bros. to report as follows — mechanics, truck drivers, and workmen, Macon, April 6; musicians, performers, and sideshow people, April 9. The show wanted one first class mechanic, sideshow boss canvasman, and had tintype and photo privileges for rent.

The 1931 Downie Bros. roster was as follows: Charles Sparks, president and manager; Charles Katz, asst. manager; Clint Shuford, treasurer; John R. Andrews, secretary; T. W. Ballenger, general agent; Fred C. Kilgore, local contractor; Earl Rogers, special agent; Irish Horan, contracting press agent; James Gallagher, advertising banners; Milt Robbins, sideshow manager; Gene Enos, equestrian director and announcer; Joe Gilligan, master of transportation; Harry Leffler, supt. privileges; Rodney Harris, musical director, big show band; Edward Washington, colored band; Albert Yarbrough, supt. reserve seat tickets Steve Roberts, supt. canvas; George Weiner, asst. supt. canvas; James Davis, supt. commissary dept; T. O. Premont, supt. lights; Clarence A. Harmon, supt. props; Harry Phillips and Jimmie Hicks, supt. ring stock; Larry Davis, supt. elephants; Fred De Ivey, boss carpenter; H. Schuyler, 24 hr. agent; George Palmer, supt. animals; Joe Scott, blacksmith; Clyde Willard, manager adv. cars; Pat Hill, checker-up; Frank McGuyre, legal adjuster.

In early April it was announced the show would have two new light plants and that Fletcher Smith was on hand lettering the new elephant trucks. The advance left April 1. William (Honest Bill) Newton Jr. came to quarters and bought some trucks, the old electric light plants, and other

equipment for the Walter L. Main Circus (motorized) which he and James Heron would operate for the 1931 season. The Main show was in quarters in Jefferson, Ohio.

The April 18, 1931 Billboard with final news before the opening said that the new cages turned out of the shops by Fred De Ivey had been elaborately decorated as had all parade vehicles. A new feature of the performance would be the introduction of the old time, once famous, leaps in which Billy Pape would do double somersaults over the elephants. The article also mentioned the show had a new and attractive line of special paper and a new booklet of handsome design with actual photos taken of the show by Irish Horan and Eddie Jackson.

It appears most of the paper used in 1931 was from Erie. One special sheet, newly designed, was for the leaps. The title of the show was now Downie Bros. Big 3 Ring Circus with all reference to wild animals eliminated. The 1930 show had carried no caged acts and none would be present in 1931 nor for any other season throughout the show's lifetime. Many of the new lithograph designs were titled, "Charles Sparks Presents Downie Bros. Circus" and newspaper ads also featured Sparks name as well as photograph. Although he had sold the use of the trade name, Sparks Circus, when he disposed of his railroad show he felt he could legally use his actual name in conjunction with any circus operation he might later have such as at present.

The show maintained the same color scheme for baggage trucks it had always used, red with title and numbering in white. The new cages as well as the tableau trucks were painted in a variety of colors.

The great depression, which had begun with the stock market crash in October 1929, was a progressive thing which saw the country's economic condition gradually worsening with unemployment increasing as the months went by until it hit it's lowest point in July 1932. Although salaries were low, so were the cost of food, rent, and other commodities. The big blow was unemployment caused by layoffs and com-

plete plant shutdowns. Anyone who had a job could make it okay even though his pay was low but for those who had no job the great depression was something fierce which can be understood only by those who lived through it. Most economists in the spring of 1931 were predicting an upturn in business, however, showmen, who had been caught short and lost heavily in 1930 were not lured into any false optimism. Most of them retrenched considerably. John Ringling for example did not sent out the John Robinson Circus at all, cut Sells-Floto from 40 to 35 cars, and Sparks from 20 to 15. He also eliminated Sparks' band in favor of canned music in an effort to lower the nut. Downie Bros. was one of the few shows which had actually expended considerable funds to upgrade it's quantity and quality.

The Billboard sent a reporter to cover the 1931 opener in Macon and his extensive review appeared in the April 25 issue which was headlined, "DOWNIE SHOW HAS FINE OPENING AT MACON, GA. Charles Sparks congratulated on his motorized outfit. Has new canvas and practically all new trucks — 'Leap' among features, parade one of beauty." His report is summarized as follows.

Perfect weather was on hand for the opener which saw people seated on the straw at both performances. It was termed the biggest opener Sparks ever had in Macon. Tents had been up a week. Outstanding feature is the old time leaps, just as popular now as ever before, with the somersault leaping by the Three Ralph Brothers, and Billy Pape, who accomplished a double over five elephants to heavy applause. Other features noted in the review were the slides of Felix and Theresa Morales, wire walking family, and the daring and sensational heel and toe catches to a trapeze by Theresa. The big liberty horse act presented by Merritt Belew, one of the Ralph Trio making a triple somersault from a springboard to a chair on the shoulders of the understander, and the furniture moving and juggling act of Karl Larkin, were all headliners of the performance.

Sparks expended a small fortune last winter and outfit is really a big surprise to every beholder. Practically all trucks are new. Recently added are two 6 wheel semi trailers in which the elephants are transported, a 30 ft. horse trailer, and several other trucks, making in all 75 conveyances with at least a dozen private cars and living vans. (Authors note: 75 should be total figure for all vehicles, advance, back on show, show owned and privately owned). All trucks are equipped with air brakes. Has all new canvas and big top seating more than 3000. (Note, since the show got practically all new major tents in late season 1930 it is believed they were used at least for the first part of 1931, possibly all season long).

A novelty this season is substitution of a solid pipe railing in front of reserved seats upon which a handsomely embossed curtain is hung and securely fastened. There

are two new electric light plants, 14 cages in menagerie (only 7 separate vehicles), 5 elephants, and 4 camels. (Note, photos indicate the camels are of the Asiatic two hump variety).

The business portion of the city was crowded for the morning street parade. The new No. 1 band chariot was painted with a replica on the sides of 'The Crusaders' by Edwin Gosch. There were a number of tableau trucks and all cages were open. A novelty was the placing of the two big 6 wheel elephant trailers just ahead and behind the elephants. There were two floats on which women performers rode, and Ella Harris and Marion Shuford rode ahead of the motorcade. There were two white bands, a colored band, clown band, and calliope (air), also three sections of lady riders, Indians, and cowboys. A delegation from Chamber of Commerce was in lead in automobiles.

On the midway was pit show of Col. Walker (large rat) and Milt Robbins side-show which had a new bannerline of 20 twelve foot banners, all double deckers. Eddie Washington and his minstrels worked the bally platform. Sideshow features included untamable lion presented by Capt. Tom Wilmoth; Ala.; Ben Deb, fire act; Keaweek Royal Hawaiians; Gertrude Redden, snakes; Minnie Gray, sword walker; Daisy Wells, trained cockatoos; Mrs. Milton Robbins, mindreader and second sight; Maxine Robbins, visual act, and Geraldine Stafford and Betty Hand, dancers. On the midway were the following concessions; R. N. Thompson, cotton candy; Jake Feldman, novelties; Teddy Webb, frozen custard; Al Rock, lunch wagon; Mrs. Frank McGuyre, doll rack; and Victor Lee with his mummy exhibition.

The detailed review of the 1931 program was as follows.

"At 2.15 Gene Enos blew his whistle and from the padroom came the opening feature entitled, 'A Pageant of the Orient'. This served to introduce all performers, handsomely groomed, and the ensemble was enhanced by all new wardrobe and trappings. Felix Morales, on trampoline, drew much applause as he turned many back somersaults. Merrit Belew and John White followed with riding dog and monkey act.

Clowns made their first appearance and feature was a tiger and skeleton chase. Next number made everyone and especially the old timers sit up and take notice. It was the introduction of the old time famous leap over the elephants. More than a half dozen leapers participated. This is bound to be a sensation all season. The leaps were followed by single elephant acts, presented by Marion Shuford, Mitzie and Ella Harris. Following in the 3 rings came the Walters Duo on the Roman rings; Satario on the swinging perch, and the Juggling Larkins, performing with Indian clubs. Clowns with walkarounds and a laugh getter was the monkey patrol wagon drawn by 6 little pigs. Merritt Belew occupied the middle ring and presented the 8 horse liberty act. In the other rings were pony drills by Neta Belew and John White. Drawing a special announcement, Felix and Theresa Morales next presented their daring slides, the former a head slide, the latter a backward foot slide. A big applause number. Misses Shuford, Wilson, and Walter performed on swinging ladders and then John White presented his leaping greyhounds on track in front of reserved seats. Clowns followed, and Karl Larkin did his furniture moving balancing act in center ring. Mary Enos did a rolling globe speciality and Satario contributed feats of hand balancing. Ella Harris, working in center ring, introduced a big elephant number with Larry Davis, keeping a watchful eye on his pachyderms.

"Following concert announcement by Fletcher Smith and a lineup of the Wild West and Fred Albert, wrestler, the Three Ralphs, presented a sensational teeter-board acrobatic number, concluding with one of the trio making a triple somersault and being caught in chair on shoulder of his partner. This feat was especially announced. Clowns on again and then there were performing goats in rings 1 and 3, introduced by Mitzie and Anna White, and Merritt Belew and his Bibb County pigs working in the center ring. Clown band followed. Next number was aerial features on trapeze by Walters Duo, Miss Wilson, and Ella Harris.

Downie Bros. on lot at Fall River, Mass. July 2, 1931. Menagerie top is in foreground with big top in rear. Photo by John Cutler.



Downie Bros. one sheet, upright, litho featured portrait of Charles Sparks. Color scheme had brown field, circus title in red with rest of lettering in cream. This sheet was actually posted in 1934 but probably the design was used as early as 1931. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

Three troupes of dogs were introduced by Miss Belew, Miss White, and John White. The Morales family on double tight wire followed, 5 people in the act and Felix made a neat backward somersault on wire. The big menage number was next with Misses Belew, Juanita Gray, Ella Harris, Marion Shuford, Hardig, Sky Eagle, Oliver and Merritt Belew, riding. Next came two high perch acts by the Larkins and Gene and Mary Enos. Especially introduced, Theresa Morales next held audience breathless as she performed on single trapeze and successfully made several heel and toe catches. One of these was after a forward somersault on a heel catch. Audience laughed at several riders endeavoring to stay on bucking mule and then came three iron-jaw numbers by Miss Walters, Miss Wilson, and Morales Sisters. Races closed the show.

"A good crowd remained for the concert and watched Fred Alberg wrestle with a local wrestler and acts by Weaver and Juanita Gray and Sky Eagle and family."

"Rodney Harris had a good 12 piece band. Musicians included Philip Yarkow and Fred Dupile, solo cornets; Clarence Udelhof, first cornet; Wiley B. Scott and Bill Stein, clarinets; Tony Larid and Fred Masore, trombones; Clarence Karr, baritone; Lary Guayard, bass, and Sam Hawkins and Al Pinard, drums."

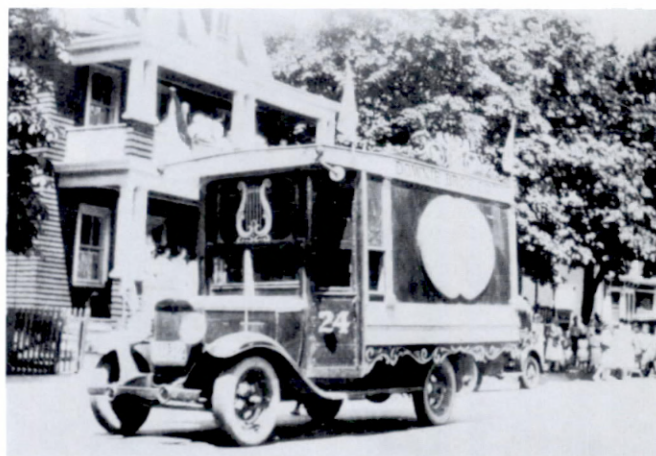
Although we have no detailed lineup of the street parade we do have some eyewitness accounts and fairly good photographic



Cage truck No. 77 in parade at Fall River, Mass., July 2, 1931. Photo by John Cutler.

coverage. The Billboard reviewer indicates the big top band was split into two sections for the parade, but other accounts indicate it played as a single unit. The air calliope, No. 24, was a different vehicle than the one pictured in 1929 and probably was built during the past winter. In addition to the cages, the dog and pig cage truck also paraded. Some of the various tableau vehicles shown in photos are No. 61 with show's title and lion and tiger paintings on the side; No. 15 with large painting of Indian and Cowboy hunting buffalo; No. 17, with animals and clown painting; No. 47 with two lions painting and title; and No. 31 with American Bison scene. Tableau No. 55 had different paintings on either side. The right had title and clown while left side had title in unusual style lettering. The clown band rode this vehicle in parade. Photos also show a truck with open sides and canopy overhead on which the Morales Family made parade.

Leaving Macon the show spent a week



Air calliope No. 24 bringing up rear in Downie Bros. parade at Fall River, Mass. July 2, 1931. Photo by John Cutler.

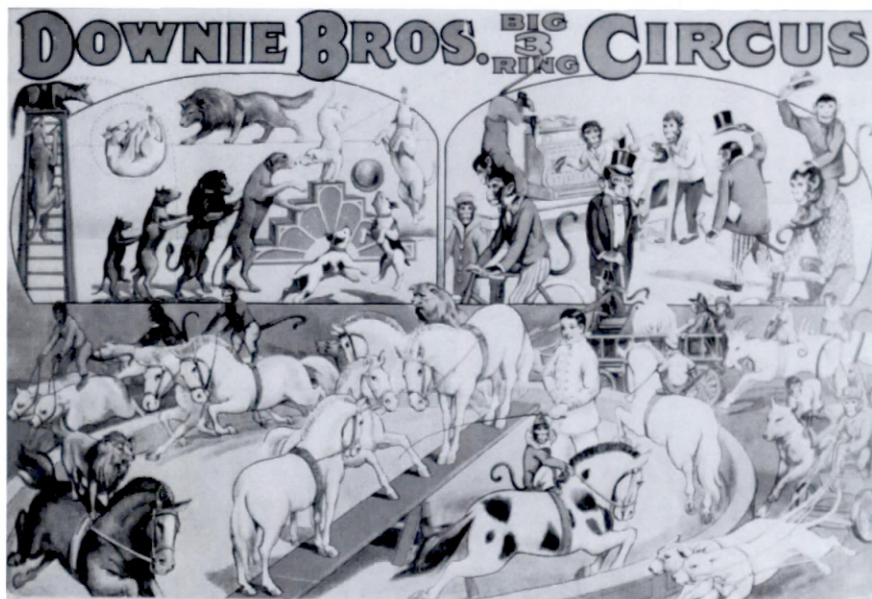
in Georgia moving almost directly northward. The spring rains soon hit and it poured all day and night at Canton. Enroute to Rome the next day it was necessary to double back thru Marietta, the stand played a day earlier, making it a long and difficult run. There was an early arrival in Dalton, final stand in Georgia, with the lot in center of town. Athens was the first town in Tennessee where it again rained. Victor Lee closed with his mummy exhibit here and Billy Burke joined the sideshow. Tennessee was crossed in only two stands with show entering Kentucky at Middlesboro on April 27. The 100 mile run there from Marysville took the show through Cumberland Gap and the trucks passed through three states in less than 10 minutes but arrived in Middlesboro okay and set up on the airport lot was completed shortly after noon.

Playing through the coalfields the show entered Virginia at Appalachia, April 30, and was in West Virginia, May 4, at Bluefield where there was good business at both shows. T. O. Premont was injured when a tire rim blew off. It was another long and hard run over the mountains to Beckley

and at Charleston, May 7, the rains returned. The lot in downtown was crowded by presence of Capt. Latlip's rides using a portion of it.

Downie went into Ohio at Marietta, May 9, fulfilling the plans to move quickly out of the south into this area which was popular with many circuses in the spring. There was a heavy rain at Lancaster, May 12, but still there was a big matinee crowd and capacity at night. The local movie houses were showing the Pathe newreel which had been taken at Downie quarters earlier in the spring.

At East Liverpool, O., May 15, the State of Ohio compelled the show to pay \$322.28 for state license plates although vehicles bore either Georgia or Maryland tags. The state didn't require purchase of Ohio tags for the trucks with Maryland plates because as one official was quoted in the trade publications, "There is an unwritten law of reciprocity between Maryland and Ohio but Georgia has a mileage tax law





and places a levy of \$110.00 on every out of state truck that travels more than 101 miles in the state which causes trouble".

While in the area Billy Burke left the show and joined Dodson's World Fair Shows (carnival).

The June 6, 1931 Billboard said that the Downie elephants and other trucks made good runs over the mountains without an accident and credit goes to Joe Gilligan, master of transportation, who rides ahead of the baggage fleet every morning and looks after the road, marking bad spots. He has 4 mechanics riding in emergency cars. A specific reference was made to the show's earlier navigation of the dangerous Cumberland Gap without mishap. So far the show had experienced only one late arrival. Elephant trucks were said to have total length of 42 feet.

While in the Upper Ohio Valley region the show was close to the Walter L. Main Circus in many spots.

Leaving Ohio the show was at Holiday's Cove, W. Va., May 16, then moved into Pennsylvania at Swickley. While playing it's initial Keystone State date, Sells-Floto was at Steubenville, Ohio and Hagenbeck-Wallace at Wheeling, W. Va. both of them only a few miles away, so there were many visits between the various circuses' personnel. While Downie was at Vandergrift, May 20, visitors came from Barnett Bros. which was playing at Ebensburg. There was rain at Butler and Kittanning. It was a long run with a late arrival in Oil City but it was a Sunday off date and no performances scheduled until the next day. Visiting the show were John and Clifton Sparks. John was currently in the motion picture business at Freeport, Pa. while the latter had his Florida Blossoms Minstrel show touring Maryland.

The June 13, 1931 Billboard said that Harry Kress had recently replaced Chester Engle in the Three Ralphs act and that Sunbury, Pa., played on Decoration Day, May 30, produced a capacity crowd at the matinee with another good turnout

Downie Bros. complete street parade lined up at Englewood, N. J., Aug. 14, 1931. Photo by E. J. Kelty.

at night. There was a long run over the Allegheny mountains to Towanda, June 1, of 91 miles. The trucks were stopped and gassed enroute and still arrival was by 9.35 A. M. It was mentioned also that Ella Harris was singing three numbers with the band. At Bradford, June 4, visits were exchanged with Fred Buchanan's 15 car Roobins Bros. Circus only 18 miles away.

Downie went into New York at Olean, June 5, and would play 14 stands in the state. While in Corning, June 8, the large rat in Col. Baker's pit show gnawed it's way out of the cage causing some excitement until finally it was captured in a shed adjoining the lot. The huge rodent attacked Col. Baker during the capture and severely bit him on the foot.

The hottest day of the season so far came at Ticonderoga, the final New York date, but show still had a fair matinee and good night house. On the following long run to Bennington, Vt. for performances, June 22, the show did not cross Lake Champlain but took the long route thru Whitehall, Hudson Falls, Ft. Edward, and Hoosick Falls.

Additional Vermont stands came at Rutland, Burlington, and Montpelier, then the show played New Hampshire dates at Lebanon and Brattleburg, before moving on to Massachusetts with first stand coming at Ware, June 29. A visitor in Ware said that Billy Pape made a forward somersault in the leaps going over 5 elephants and 2 camels, and that Felix Morales astonished all by doing 150 somersaults from a trampoline.

After two dates in the Bay State the show went into Connecticut for a single stand at Donielson where business was described as not so good despite fact that all of the mills were working.

Returning to Massachusetts the show encountered some pleasant trouping and

good business. The women showfolks gave a party at Wareham, July 8, at the state beach about 4 miles from the lot. At New Bedford, July 9, three performances were given, 2, 3.30, and 8. Falmouth on Cape Cod gave good business with the crowd on the straw. Two stands in Rhone Island were good and at Newport, July 10, one afternoon and two evening performances were give. Overall business in this general area was consistently the best the show enjoyed all season. Back into Massachusetts the show played stands at Salem, Woburn, and Southbridge, then returned to Connecticut to play South Manchester, July 17. CHS Wes Herwig visited that day and recalls his visit as follows.

"I saw the Downie show in 1931 on July 17 at So. Manchester, Conn. and jotted down the following about their parade in my notebook. 'The following animals appeared in the parade line-up; 4 lions, 1 black bear, 2 tigers, 2 leopards, 1 hyena, 4 elephants, and 4 camels. (One elephant did not make the march that day). Also in parade were 3 chariots with lady drivers drawn by 2 ponies each, also 2 chariots with a clown in each and drawn by 2 ponies each. There were the usual 3 bands, also the Morales Family on a truck. A Funny Ford with two clowns in it followed the calliope at end of parade.'"

A final return to Massachusetts followed with stands at Northampton and Great Barrington. The late Isaac Marcks, father of CHS Don Marcks, recorded the following in his notebook after viewing the trucks pass thru his hometown of Pittsfield, Mass. and later the performance at Great Barrington, July 18.

"Downie Bros. Circus went through here this morning enroute to today's date at Great Barrington, where they are playing on the fair grounds. They have 14 cages (7 separate vehicles), 5 elephants, 4 camels. Some trucks are semi-trailers with air brakes. They have 8 tents for the big top, menagerie, two sideshows, dressing tent, dining tent, kitchen, and horse tops. The afternoon show was given about 2.30 P.M.

to a small crowd. They have a good show and everything looks clean and neat. It began to rain about 5 P.M. and rained hard up to early evening with the night show starting on schedule. They here the morning of July 19 at headed for Poughkeepsie, N. Y."

Marcks final note indicates that most of the time the show didn't move until the early morning hours. Also it appears the fleet as usual travelled in convoy.

The Billboard commenting on recent Downie activities in New England said that the 3 shows given in New Bedford, Mass. were in a drizzling rain and crowd was on the straw each time. It was on a lot used by Ringling-Barnum only 10 days previous. At noon the first motorized circus parade was given that was ever seen in New Bedford. The crowd was so heavy the ticket wagon closed at night and the sideshow ran continuously from 12.30 P.M. until midnight.

Despite the bad business depression of the time there were little spurts of superb circus business such as Downie got in New England and Robbins Bros. experienced while in New York state at several stands. For some unexplained reason when practically every circus was crying the blues over no business these little bright spots came up which saw the crowds flocking to the ticket wagons like they did in the lush seasons of the late 1920's. Unfortunately these little spots of good business were few and far between in 1931.

A report in The White Tops at the time said that CFA members visiting Downie Bros. had noted that Larry Davis had the five Downie bulls working wonderfully. He had broken Queen and Pinto into the act with Teddy, Tena, and Babe and the herd was doing a 20 trick act in 4 minutes.

In mid-July The Billboard reported that Marion Shuford, wife of Downie treasurer, Clint Shuford, had been added to the specialty acts with her "waltz and rear" horse and was scoring with the audience. Also it was reported that Georgia had remitted to Ohio truck owners all license fees collected and that Charlie Sparks had been refunded his \$322.22 by Ohio.

Dr. Hugh Grant Rowell, noted circus fan, visited Downie at Peekskill, N. Y., July 21, and wrote to the Billboard praising

the show, especially the new GMC trucks and semis used to haul the horses and elephants. Rowell said the show was using plenty of special paper and prices for the big show were 50¢ general admission and 1.00 for reserves. He concluded that Downie had about as much now as Sparks ever had on rails and was making as long jumps.

After a week in New York state the show went into Pennsylvania at Honesdale, July 27, and remained for 7 stands. George Barlow visited at the initial date and wrote The Billboard that the big top was two-thirds filled at both performances and he quoted Sparks that business had been very good of late considering the wet lots and bad storms. Barlow was impressed with the elephant and horse semis and advised that the big top was a 100 ft. round with three 40's and menagerie a 60 with two 30's and one 20. His final note said the Downie street parade stretched a mile in length.

The Wheeler and Sawtell Circus was nearby for a week. Sparks and his wife visited that show at Callicoon, N.Y. and at Honesdale the next day Messers Wheeler and Almond and their wives returned the visit. Both shows billed heavily in all of these opposition stands but not one sheet of paper was covered by the other nor any other unfair methods resorted to.

While Downie was at the first New Jersey stand, August 4, at Newton, the first major circus casualty of the season occurred when the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West Show folded for good in Washington, D. C. At Morristown, August 5, E. J. Kely visited and photographed the Downie outfit. While in New Jersey the show was in close competition with the Walter L. Main Circus. Downie played Asbury Park, August 8, and Main, August 11. Downie reported it had good weather and business alike while Main played in the rain with a slight take.

The August 22, 1931 Billboard said that Downie Bros. got favorable business in New Jersey but it was felt the Jersey shore resorts had been overworked by circuses this season. While the show was in the state Barnett Bros. as well as Walter L. Main was in the near vicinity at many stands. A two day rain hit at Perth Amboy and Rahway and at the latter stand Walter L. Main was only a few blocks away.

Downie left the circus saturated state and entered Pennsylvania at Norristown, August 18, with both Barnett and Main

following into the Philly area. After York the next day Downie went into Maryland to play Annapolis and Westminster, then returned to the Keystone State for Waynesboro, Johnstown, and Uniontown. Three dates in West Virginia followed, then it was into Virginia at Covington on August 29.

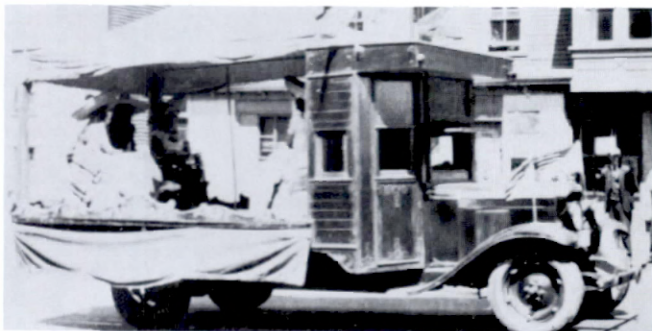
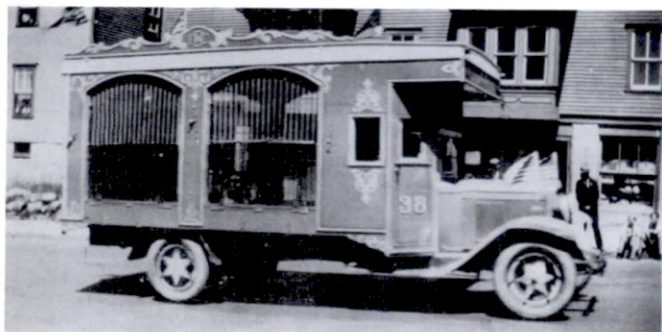
The Aug 29, 1931 Billboard said that the show was to test a Pennsylvania law thought to be unfair which had been construed that a truck was in the same category as a railroad car. The show had paid an amusement tax back in May at Pittsburg of \$150.00 on basis of the circus having 40 trucks and a few days later was assessed an additional \$600.00 amusement tax on grounds the circus was assessable under the 25-50 railroad car tax, making a total of \$750.00 paid. Attorney John C. Graham, a circus fan in Pittsburg, was employed and a case was entered in Common Pleas Court of Westmoreland County, Pittsburgh.

Downie Bros. was in Richmond, Va., Sept. 5, where visitors reported the equipment was still in excellent condition and noted that Billy Pape's leaps continued to draw raves for the audience.

A week in North Carolina began at Rocky Mount, Sept. 7, and the show continued southward into South Carolina with first stand coming at Florence, Sept. 12. Charleston, Sept. 14, was a fine one and three shows were given but other spots were only fair. Matinees at Newberry, Hartsville, Lancaster, and Chester were only so-so with extreme heat keeping some of the crowds away. However the cotton crop just in was selling as low as 5 cents a pound in some of the South Carolina towns played and the natives just didn't have the price of admission. As was true a year ago some of the travelling in the state was rough. Going from Chester to Greenwood, Sept. 26, detours brought the mileage to 146 instead of the regular 84, however everything was on the lot by 8.30 A.M. and there was no delay in the parade or matinee. Visitors from Sparks Circus came at Newberry. Although business wasn't up to standard at most spots, Jimmie Gallagher, banner solicitor, said he was doing well and always had plenty of banners for the bulls and camels in parade.

In the meantime the great depression

Truck float with Morales Family in parade at Fall River, Mass., July 2, 1931. Photo by John Cutler.





Downie Bros. personnel on lot at Morristown, N. J., Aug. 5, 1931. Performers and band are in spec costumes. Photo by E. J. Kelty (Pfening Collection)

was making itself felt throughout the circus world and all were hurting, from the largest to the smallest. Many shows were closing early due to poor business. Lewis Bros. called it a season at Benton Harbor, Mich., Sept. 5; Robbins Bros. folded after playing Mobile, Ala., Sept. 12; Walter L. Main ended it's season, Sept. 14, and also on that day in Atlanta, Ga. Ringling-Barnum closed it's earliest ever up to that time and returned to Sarasota quarters.

Downie went back into North Carolina at Hendersonville, Sept. 29, and after three stands moved to Georgia to play Toccoa on October 3. In five stands the show had crossed the state and gone into Alabama at Gadsden on October 9. Charlie Duble, noted circus composer and trombone player, joined the Downie band at Cedar-town, Ga., Oct. 8.

Eight dates came in Alabama before the show returned to Georgia for West Point, Oct. 19, and after playing Opelike, Ala. the next day, returned to it's home state for the final 4 stands of the season. Last date of the 1931 season was at Moultrie, October 24, then the show moved on to it's winterquarters in Macon. Total mileage of the season was 8459. Only shows still on the road following Downie's closing were the Sparks Railroad Circus, Mighty Haag, Russell Bros., Schell Bros., Original Gentry, and Mack Hale Bros.

The Oct. 24, 1931 Billboard in commenting on the season which was fast being concluded by all shows said that some circuses had a fairly successful season while others just about broke even. A number found business spotty with not many big days. It was noted that Robbins Bros. and Downie Bros. played several stands in the east where it was necessary to give 3 shows. Charlie Sparks brought his Downie show back to the barn a winner as was his custom and profitwise the show probably did as well as any on the road, considerably better than most of them.

Things remained fairly quiet in Macon for the next several weeks until the Dec. 19, 1931 Billboard said that the show would enlarge for 1932 and all new canvas, grandstand, and some animal dens and trailers would be built. Shops were scheduled to

open the first of the year. Supt. Fred Delvey would build the grandstand and it was planned to construct 9 solid steel semis and 3 large wild animal dens. Some new vehicles were built but it is doubtful all of those planned were actually constructed and bit about additional dens seems to be little more than the usual press agent talk at this time of year. Other notes said that trainer Merritt Belew had added a number of horses to his liberty group and the menage act would also get additional animals. The article mentioned that there had been a birthday party for Mrs. Sparks on the closing day in Moultrie with 263 employees in attendance.

The Dec. 26, 1931 Billboard had an excellent descriptive article on the Downie quarters in Central City Park, Macon, Ga. which read as follows.

"Upon entering the park one first comes to the office building and here can be found Charles Sparks, Clint Shuford, secy-treas; Charles Katz, asst. manager, also supt. of quarters. In rear are wardrobe rooms in charge of Mrs. Sparks. Next to the office are modern living quarters for the men. It has twenty 14 x 14 outside rooms which are completely furnished. In these quarters is a radio with loud speaker. Cook-house and dining room are under personal direction of Jack Fitzgerald and meals are of the best. Dining room seats 48 at one time and meals are served hotel style. Next is horse barn, in charge of Melvin Arnold. It contains 20 head of trained horses and ring stock, 10 head of ponies, and 2 mules each in separate box stalls.

"Main ring barn is an all brick building, 70 ft. in diameter, with no posts or obstructions. Merritt Belew has a regulation ring in the center where he spends 6 hours each day, improving the old and breaking in new stock. Domestic animal ring barn is 50 x 100 ft. with 2 rings, in charge of Jerome O'Hanlon. Elephant barn, 70 x 50, one ring, is in charge of Larry Davis.

At present he is breaking the herd of 5 in a new routine.

"Animal house, 60 x 50, is in charge of George Palmer. There are comfortable permanent cages. Paint shop, 100 x 50, is in charge of Irving Goseh. Mechanical dept., 100 x 75, in charge of Mr. McNeil, is a busy place, as every motor with the show is thoroughly overhauled and tested before opening of the season.

"Fred Delvey has charge of building and repair shop and during the winter will build a number of large dens and grandstand. Blacksmith shop is in charge of Joe (Scotty) Nobel; carpenter and wagon shop, George Ingolls. At this writing 2 cages and 2 semitrailers are being built. Teddie Premont is supt. of the electrical department."

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TED BOWMAN
627 North Marsalis
Dallas, Texas 75203

The Anti-Circus Laws In Connecticut 1773~1840

By Stuart Thayer

The circus has been the object of disapproval and regulation almost continuously since its beginning in this country. Originally, objections to it were made on religious grounds, amusements were against the laws of God. This led to political action and various states passed laws against such things. Still later, licensing and regulation by municipalities became common.

From being absolutely banned the genre has gradually won acceptance of the principal that it should be allowed to exist. Opposition from the pulpit was long-lasting, but in the political area opposition gradually disappeared and only the ban on Sunday performances was left. In the 1930's in some cities it was still against the law for amusements to be held on the Sabbath. Now, it appears, the only regulations are those applied in the interests of health and public safety.

Initially, it was the close relationship between the theatre and the circus that affected the latter's acceptability. In the eighteenth century the programs of the two were nearly interchangeable. The theatre had, as a matter of tradition, rope-dancers and acrobats as entracts or as attractions between dramas. Likewise, the circus had pantomimes and melodramas on its programs. Because the theatre productions made moral statements it was condemned, while the circus, which had no moral pretensions whatsoever, suffered by association. In the public eye they were not differentiated as they are today.

We find it difficult to understand how a display of athletic skills could be treated the same as the representation of reality that was the theatre. To the Puritans and their descendants in thought it was all make-believe, none of it was honest work, and therefore it showed the devil's hand.

Fortunately for the circus it came late to the game. By 1793 when the multi-act circus was introduced in America only local objections to the theatre survived. Philadelphia had rescinded its anti-theatre laws in 1789, Massachusetts in 1792. The early New York law had long been discarded. The cities, which was where the circus found its custom, were large, and cosmopolitan and in need of amusement for the many travelers who passed through them. Good hotels and entertainment were as necessary to a city's health in those days as in our own.

There were one state, however, that held out against these liberalizing tendencies. Connecticut had a law against amusements until the time of the Civil War. In 1773 an act was passed suppressing mountebanks

because they corrupted manners, promoted idleness and were a detriment to good order and religion. By mountebanks was meant any person involved in plays, tricks, juggling, feats of uncommon dexterity and agility of body. The penalty was fixed at twenty pounds for each such offense and if it were done by a servant, minor or apprentice then the master, parent or guardian was liable for the fine.



To the CURIOUS.
A beautiful African LION.

To be seen every day in the week, Sundays excepted, during his continuance in this town, at Mr. JOSEPH PRATT'S Tavern in Hartford.

THIS noble animal is upwards of three feet high, measures seven feet from nostrils to tail; is of a beautiful dun colour, six years old, and uncommonly strong built. His legs and tail are as thick as those of a common sized Ox; he was caught in the woods of Goree, in Africa, when a Whelp, and brought from thence to New-York. He is as tame as any domestick Animal whatever, and is really worth the contemplation of the curious.

Price of admittance is, Nine-Pence, each person.
N. B. The stay of this sovereign of animals, in this place will be but short, the Proprietor intending to exhibit him through the United States.

In 1798 attempts to rescind the measure led to a re-writing of the act of 1773. The new act forbade tricks of tumbling, rope-walking or dancing, puppet shows or any uncommon feats of agility of the body for money. The fine was fixed at no more than two hundred dollars nor less than sixty.

The existence of these laws did not deter showmen completely, but it seems to have affected their methods when in Connecticut. John Bill Ricketts, for instance, played in Hartford in 1795, but contrary to the usual practice of erecting a wooden arena he gave his show in a canvas side-walled space. We guess that he would have had to petition the city fathers for permission to build a building and since it was against the law for him to perform they would have been obliged to refuse him. The populace, apparently, wanted their law and amusements as well, the worst of hypocrisies.

One asks why the law wasn't rescinded since it was obviously broken practically at will. The answer to this would seem to lie with the state's educators. Connecticut in the early nineteenth century was a bastion of private schools, the result of the state's encouragement of education ever since its beginning. As early as 1650 a law was passed requiring any settlement of fifty families to erect a school. In 1655 the number of families was reduced to thirty-eight. Every town of one hundred families had to build a grammar school to prepare youths for the University. In 1795 the sale of the lands in the Western Reserve brought the state \$1,200,000 and this sum was promptly put into a school fund. With such a history of support for education the state attracted educators and many schools were opened, most of them boarding schools.

In 1835 the Connecticut senate rejected a measure which would have permitted circus performances when approved by the Superior Court and the town council where they were to be given. In 1837 a petition bearing the signatures of a thousand citizens of Hartford asked that the drama be legalized. The argument was given that since theatres were allowed in all the other states of the Union and all the civilized nations of the world, Connecticut's law had become an anomaly.

In response many petitions were presented arguing that the law should remain as it was. Theatres were described as immoral institutions. The regulations forbidding them were beneficial to the state's moral and economic health. In addition, Connecticut was filled with academies and colleges that attracted students because the community was free from such degrading influences. The faculty of Wesleyan College made a special plea against rescinding the law. As a result, no action was taken on the petition of the Hartford citizens.

In 1840 a bill was introduced that would allow towns to decide for themselves whether or not to allow circuses to appear in them. This, too, was rejected.

It is difficult to measure how often the law was broken by circus proprietors as they usually did not advertise in newspapers in Connecticut. They had to make do with handbills, and handbills have not survived in quantity. There are references to performances in Hartford that it is impossible to verify. One impresario did advertise, however, and the subject of his message leads us to the subject of our paper.

In 1825 the Albany Circus, under the

It may be admitted that in some respects the circus is free from the evils connected with the theatre; while, perhaps, it has new evils of its own. Still, there are, in our view, objections equally applicable to both. The waste of time – the corruption of taste – the temptations held out to the young, to obtain, improperly, the means of attendance – the dissipation of serious

Three weeks later, the argument apparently still being discussed, James Hunter made his appearance in Hartford and proceeded to give performances. Hunter, an Englishman, had come to America in late 1822 at the behest of Messrs. Price and Simpson who had just bought James West's stud and leases. Hunter was the first man to ride a horse "in the rude state of nature," what we would call bare-

We suspect that because of his ability and the fine reception he received from American audiences Hunter's salary was comparatively high. He began to appear with troupes other than that of Price and Simpson, but usually for limited engagements. He would perform for a month with one troupe, then appear with another

for a like time. In between these appearances he often gathered companies of his own together for short engagements in various cities. It was one of these that appeared in Hartford, but because he could not advertise in the newspapers we have only his name as a participant.

Performances were given at least from the 10th to the 13th of March at which time Hunter was arrested and charged with committing rope-dancing, tumbling and various feats of uncommon dexterity or agility of body. The case was titled *Sundry Inhabitants of Hartford vs. James Hunter*. It was heard on March 28, 1826.

There were seven counts in the complaint, three allegedly for March 10 and four for March 13. No evidence was offered for the March 10 allegations, but a witness testified that he attended the circus on March 13 and saw riding without saddle or bridle and leaping through a hoop from horseback; walking on a slack-wire and leaping through a hoop and displaying colors from it; turning a somersault from a horse; still vaulting; dancing a hornpipe dextrously to music on the tight-rope by the defendant accompanied by a display of colors and turning a somersault from the rope by the defendant. The defendant appeared to the witness to be the principal of the circus and was present during most of the performance. Four or five

hundred people were assembled.

In Hunter's defense evidence was offered to the effect that the circus was on private property, standing on the land of Mr. Samuel Olcott; was enclosed, the doors furnished with locks and no persons permitted to be present who had not purchased tickets. Also, no stage had been erected in the circus.

In addition, several defense witnesses testified that the feats performed at the circus did not constitute tumbling in the proper sense of the term.

In summing up the judge informed the jury that it was their duty to find a verdict for the plaintiffs. The jury returned into court twice, stating that they could not agree. On the third attempt they found a special verdict (according to one newspaper) finding Hunter guilty of rope-dancing and extraordinary feats of agility and dexterity of body. The judge then fined him sixty dollars, the minimum under the statute.

One of the more interesting reactions to the trial appeared in the *Baltimore Patriot* on April 14:

Question — is there also a law in Connecticut prohibiting certain feats of the mind in the legislature that no one has performed an extraordinary feat of liberality and good sense by

blotting from the statute book of a state situated in the midst of enlightened and liberal republics, such a relic of the darker ages?

Hunter himself published the following card:

Mr. Hunter, being about to leave Hartford, takes this public method of expressing his acknowledgement to its citizens generally, for the very kind reception given him during his short stay among them . . . He leaves Hartford with no other feelings than those of good will towards its citizens — he leaves it in the hope of one day re-visiting it under happier auspices.

There is no evidence that he ever returned to the city, nor that any other circus visited it prior to 1840.

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THE CIRCUS YEAR IN REVIEW

By Don Marcks

1975

The energy crisis fizzled, but inflation and unemployment were running wild as 1975 got underway. Despite these problems circus owners were anxious to get started on their annual tours, confident that they could lick anything that might confront them.

As usual the first show out was the James M. Cole Circus, playing eastern dates. They did rather well and, as in the past, seemed to set the trend for what the season would be.

Every show on the road was hurt by inflation and its resulting high costs. In some instances acts demanded and received additional pay to help offset the cost of gas and other supplies. When increased profits were reported it was generally the result of higher ticket prices rather than an increase in attendance.

Out on the west coast, as Circus Vargas was winding up its 1974 tour at Alameda (Calif.) on Jan. 2-7, Ringling-Barnum was launching its new 106th edition in Florida. The show featured a salute to the nation's Bi-centennial and later was to be recognized by the Bi-centennial Commission for its outstanding performance.

Ringling-Barnum soon filed suits against the officials and Sarasota (Fla.) County in an effort to have its local taxes reduced. Since the show and most of the equipment was out of state for the biggest share of the year they charged it should not be taxed on the same basis as were firms who were permanently located in the county.

By Mid-January, the American Cont'l Circus was announcing plans for a March opening with a 30 week tour set and Mike Douglas' TV Show was featuring circus acts that had been filmed on location in Florida. Other shows were announcing their opening plans and all seemed confident that 1975 was going to be a good year.

During a rehearsal in Florida for Ringling-Barnum's annual TV special, highwire star Philippe Petit fell and suffered internal injuries and several broken ribs. It was his first fall and would not only keep him out of the TV special, but would also prevent him from performing for several months.

In late January, Ringling-Barnum's Blue Unit rehearsals were underway at Venice. Murray Hill announced plans for expansion of his show activity and a brand new show - Mitchell Bros. - announced plans for a debut in Texas, but then failed to appear. In the meantime Patterson Bros. were pulling good crowds during an early tour of Michigan, thereby fooling the experts who had said the massive unemployment in that state would be disastrous to shows.

Stebbing's Royal European Circus opened Jan. 18-19 at Fort Meade (Fla.) and re-

quired an elephant, its first. The Royal Hanneford Circus opened in Florida and many of the Shrine circuses were already in operation.

Early in the year a newspaper article prompted showman Irvin Feld to make an offer to buy England's Princess Anne's stable of horses. He received a curt reply which said in part "never believe what you read in the newspapers."

Polack Bros. attracted good crowds and offered a strong program during its opening weeks. Later the program would vary greatly as acts came and left throughout the season. In the latter part of the year the show had more time off than ever and by the end of the tour owner Louis Stern admitted profits were down. "Just too many shows on the road," he said.

Circus Vargas reopened for the 1975 season in late January at San Bernardino (Calif.) where they had a hassle with the musicians union and ended up playing records for the show, while pickets marched in front of the big circus tent.

Merle Evans made the first of many public band concert appearances at Corydon (Ind.) in February, while long-time announcer Lucky Larabee left Clyde Bros. Circus to freelance, and turned his duties over to show owner Howard Suez. At the same time James Zoppe was creating a new riding act for the Carden-Johnson Circus.

The Int'l All Star Circus opened in Florida, while Hubert Castle's Circus was receiving raves from the press at Fort Wayne (Ind.) and Struppi Hanneford was honored

dates in 1975 but after a very short stay toured the remainder of the season independently. Personnel and physical set-up were practically the same as pictured here. Photo by Brownie's Studio (Aiken, S.C.) Courtesy of Art Doc Miller.

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This newspaper ad was used by the King Bros. Circus date at Carrollton, Ga., October 7, 1976. Joe Bradbury Collection.

ported it would be out until late in the year. Circus Kirk released plans for a big year, then purchased new trucks and ac-

Performers and animals alongside big top of the George Hanneford Jr. Circus during engagement with Deggeller's Magic Midway at a fair date in Aiken, S. C. Fall of 1974. Hanneford was scheduled to again be with Deggeller for a number of





George Mathews Great London Circus on lot at Chamblee, Ga. (Atlanta area) June 29, 1975. Ed Russell's sideshow with

carnival type canvas bannerline is at right and orange and white striped big top in rear. Photo by Joe Bradbury.

by the Ringling Museum of the Circus. In the meantime Voorheis Bros. Circus was doing well on its early run through Michigan, again proving the experts were wrong.

By late February Charles Bros. Circus was ready to tour, and Fisher Bros. was already on the road. A strong program of acts was featured by the Puerto Rican circus Gran Circo Americano, but it folded early for lack of business, leaving acts on their own and having to find their own means of returning to the states.

New records were achieved in Louisville (Ky) by Polack Bros. where unemployment was high and an outbreak of flu was in progress. Meantime in Florida, Philippe Petit was released from the hospital, but was ordered to take a long rest.

An early announcement from the Canadian government that they would henceforth apply a 15% withholding tax on income of all foreign shows and performers went almost unnoticed. However, now and then a complaint would be heard from some American performer, but little if any attention was paid to these complaints.

A special circus performance, sponsored by the Christian Council of Atlanta (Ga.) played to some 17,000 children and featured many FSU circus performers. The event brought loud protests and threats of suits from Ringling-Barnum, who charged the show would hurt their attendance when the Big One arrived in Atlanta later in the year.

Dailey Bros. was jumping all over the country, beating shows into towns everywhere and generally operating like in "the old days." Complaints about the show and its method of operation became a regular thing all year-long, from both opposition shows and sponsors.

Milwaukee's (Wisc.) Tripoli Shrine Circus offered a new program for Feb. 18-23 that was loaded with talent and drew big crowds. Meanwhile at White Plains (N.Y.) the Royal

Hanneford Circus was rated as a strong show with good audience appeal.

Hal Haviland made another court appearance in his continuous fight against the government and its animal regulations. Observers felt the weight of evidence was in his favor, but a decision was delayed until some other time. As the year progressed even tougher laws were to be enacted by both the Federal government and various states, all of which caused great concern and worry for animal trainers, circuses and circus fans.

The Fleckles Circus was in Detroit; Int'l All Star was in Georgia and Fisher Bros. were still in Texas, while De Wayne Bros. was making the first of its 1975 tour dates in California. Hunt's Circus made its first bow since 1963 and played a brief tour along the east coast in what seemed was a constant downpour of rain. Meanwhile the TNT & Royal Olympic was booking a series of shopping center dates in the mid-west, an area already being played by Hamid-Morton.

Angry rain and wind storms greeted the George Mathews Circus as it opened the season at Foster City (Calif.) in early March, but even so the show attracted large throngs of people. George Hubler and Paul Kaye were presenting the usual strong shows they are noted for and Holiday Hippodrome was doing well on its route.

Hoxie Bros. opened in Florida with a red, white and blue top. Both Harold Bros. and Hamid-Morton were having successful engagements in the mid-west and two special school circuses did well in Southern California.

Business was "excellent" for American Cont'l during the first half of its tour, while the Happytime Circus was struggling to move one piece of equipment at a time, from town-to-town due to a lack of help. Fisher Bros. reported business was up and that they'd only had two days of rain since they opened.

John Strong's Circus encountered difficulties and at times had to cancel some



Big top of Mid-America Circus on lot at Beatrice, Nebr., Aug. 21, 1975. Photo by Bill Green.

California dates because of bad weather, while Mid-America Circus was doing good under sunny skies in the mid-west. Meanwhile in Florida construction was underway on a new exhibit building at the Ringling Museum of the Circus.

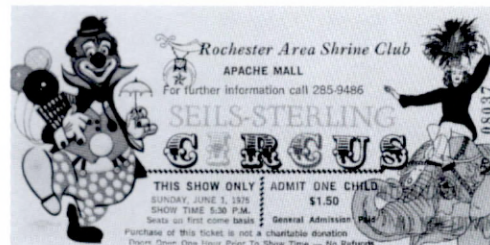
William Kay's Circus did good at Madison (Wisc.) and the Spanish Boys Circus was now touring in Mexico, while Fleckles pulled good crowds in Chicago. Carson & Barnes opened in Texas to fair crowds with an over-long show and Circus Vargas was still playing on the west coast.

Castle's circus reported good business, well ahead of last year, for its date in Salem (Ore.) and Daily Bros. was fighting rain and mud in Texas, while Fisher Bros. had a big date at the San Antonio Air Base.

In Ohio a BBB Black List included circus promotions of that area. Royal Ranch cancelled a Georgia date rather than compete with a local carnival and John Strong was already reporting that business was down as much as 50%.

The George Mathews Circus continued to play without sponsors and was drawing well, then played Long Beach (Calif.) under the Polack banner while Polack itself was in another location. Meantime the new Russell Bros. made a brief tour in Michigan, and Wallace & Rogers were rapidly moving north along the west coast, hurrying to Canada.

Rudy Jacobi revived the famous old Seils-Sterling Circus title for some of the Rudy Bros. dates in 1975.



The Beatty-Cole show was out but found it difficult to battle the constant bad weather in the east. In many cases they had to cancel dates completely, while some were rescheduled for a later time. As the year progressed they would continue to play their usual route, but for some reason remained virtually out of the limelight all season.

On April 14th, a fire damaged Barnum Hall at the Tufts University in Connecticut and the stuffed figure of Jumbo was completely destroyed, as were some valuable circus items. That same day two circus elephants got out on the highway near New Smyrna Beach (Fla.) and caused traffic problems. One elephant was bumped by a car, then promptly sat down on the vehicle, causing great concern on the part of the motorist.

George Hanneford had his small circus out with Deggeller Shows, then jumped into the western states for some dates and finally went out on his own for the remainder of the year. For the winter months the show moved into the Circus Hall of Fame. New England Shrine Clubs were offered a strong circus program, Commerford & Shea were doing good business, and Hoxie Bros. announced they would not play Michigan because of the unemployment situation there and the already overcrowded number of shows in the area.

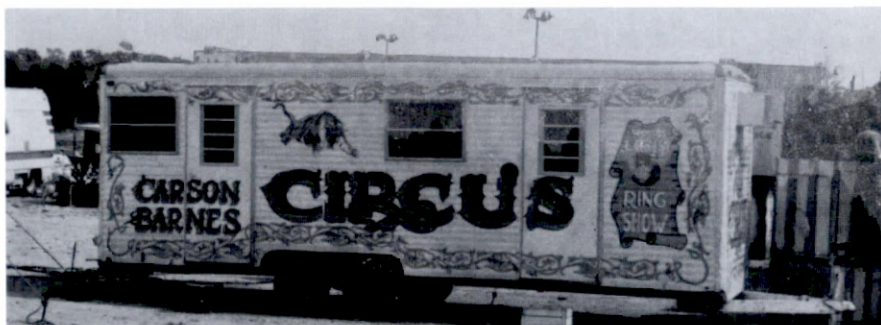
Ringling-Barnum established new records at Baltimore, Carson & Barnes were pulling good crowds and business was improving for John Strong. The George-Matthews Circus continued to be hit by bad weather, yet was doing good business in Las Vegas (Nev.). At one time a section of seats collapsed, but no one was injured.

Royal Bros. opened their season in Canada in May and were out until late fall. For the first time they ventured out into Western Canada and proved to be stiff competition for Wallace & Rogers. The Emmett Kelly, Jr. Circus was jumping all over the country to generally fair business, while several shows were converging on Texas, in what they hoped would be lucrative area.

In May, the wife of circus ringmaster Ernie McLean, filed a damage suit for \$250,000 for injuries reportedly received in a fall over some show cables, during a circus at Toledo. This action was quickly followed by a \$75,000 suit by her husband for loss of his wife's services during the time she was injured.

Bad weather continued to plague the George Matthews Circus in Texas, and the Mid-American Circus was moving into Louisiana. Meantime in California, Larry Pisoni's dream became a reality when he was able to launch his own show - The Pickle Family Circus. De Wayne Bros. was moving north along the Pacific Coast, while Ringling-Barnum went into Hartford (Conn.) for the first time since their bad fire in that city in 1944.

Business was good at Shreveport (La.) for Kaye Cont'l despite some heavy rains that swept through the area. In the State of Washington the new 1776 Circus made its debut, played four stands then called it



The only truck lettered with the Carson & Barnes title was the ticket wagon during the 1975 season. Pfenning Photo.

quits and placed everything on the sale block. Reid Bros. started its spring tour, while in Texas a group of CFA's at Mesquite produced a circus sponsored by the local church.

In early June plans were announced for a permanent Wild West Park at North Platte (Nebr.) to replace the annual Montie Montana event in that city. Initial plans called for circus exhibits, musicals, wild west events and other tourist attracting features.

King Bros. which had been out since March, reported business was well ahead of last year and that the show would stay on the road until late in the year. In California the Europorama Show was just starting its season, while Howard Suez announced he was going to take his Clyde Bros. Circus to Mexico City for 5 weeks or more. Fans in the mid-west reported that Carson & Barnes and the George Matthews Circus were doing well, in that area.

In late May a mix-up developed over who had brought the license and when it was discovered that no one had, the City Council of a small Southern California city ordered the John Strong Circus to get out of town. The show moved just outside the city limits and drew big crowds.

In June, the "Old Chicago" mall opened, near Chicago, and featured a unique turn-of-the-century shopping center. Continuous

Circus Vargas on lot at Lenox Square, Atlanta, Ga., Oct. 16, 1975. The orange colored big top was added several weeks earlier and the standard circus type marquee was a new feature in 1975. Photo by Joe Bradbury.



entertainment is provided on a free basis, using many top name circus stars.

A renewed interest in the circus was obvious when news was released that several books about the circus and circus people would be released by holiday time. These included Tom Mix, Hoxie Bros., Karl Wallenda, etc. Later it was reported that some of the books had already been scheduled to become motion pictures.

Castle was making his 12th annual tour of Canada to good business and he was followed by the American Cont'l which also drew good crowds. In the states Paul Kaye reported this had been his most successful season, and other shows had similar reports. Wallace & Rogers were in Canada and on May 23rd their big top was ripped by strong winds. A few days later their seal truck was overturned and damaged, but none of the animals were hurt. The truck was towed from one town to another until a new unit could be purchased.

At Peru (Ind.) the house built by Jerry Mugivan, in 1929, was up for sale at a price of \$130,000, while in Florida Kirby Grant (Sky King) was starting work on a home for orphans. Commenting on his years with the circus he said, "I traveled with them (Carson & Barnes) for several years and made a lot of money, but it wasn't much fun."

Some 270 delegates registered for the CFA convention at Providence, (R.I.) where the RBBB Blue Unit was playing. Fisher Bros. got away from some recent bad weather and reported that business was up, and Eddie Zacchini resigned dates at both Nashville (Tenn.) and Huntsville (Ala.) for 1976. The Hunt's Circus was still plagued by rain, while Polack Bros. enjoyed good business and weather, playing in an air-conditioned building at Las Vegas.



By the middle of the year Circus Kingdom was playing in Wisconsin and the Emmett Kelly, Jr. Circus was in Chicago. At the same time Lion Country Safari Park (Fla. and Calif.) announced they would sign circus acts as a means of boosting attendance and the Happytime Circus was being featured at the Vallejo (Calif.) fair. Meanwhile Fisher Bros. moved into Tennessee, Carson & Barnes went into Ohio and Franzen Bros. were in Wisconsin.

The Wm. Kay Circus got good local news coverage during its dates in the Northwest, John Strong moved into Atlanta (Ga.) and in California the new Swan Bros. made its debut. Roger Smith joined Clyde Bros. to take over the cat act and Frank Brown's Circus was signing acts for a tour in Mexico.

National news services thoroughly covered Dailey Bros. Circus in Idaho and their elephant that went walking through town, peeking into windows. Meanwhile, Wallace & Rogers were the first show to play the Northwest Territories, an event that went almost unnoticed, except for a couple of trade papers. Garden Bros. went into Nova Scotia two months ahead of their usual schedule and Kaye Cont'l were in St. Louis.

Ringling-Barnum announced plans for a Black Community marketing program in a move designed to attract more minorities to the circus, while some of their performers, relaxing at a Phoenix (Ariz.) motel, rescued a swimmer from the pool. The rescuers preferred to remain unknown. Meanwhile in Texas Judge Roy Hofheinz lost control of the Houston Astrodome because of excessive debts.

When the George Matthews Circus played the Deep South they fooled the experts who said they were in the wrong area at the wrong time, and the Royal

The unusual big top used by the Hoxie Bros. Circus is pictured behind some of their attractive trucks during the 1975 season. Pfening Photo.

Lipizzan Stallion Show suffered its first major accident on June 23rd at Unitah (Utah). A truck load of horses swerved and then went over a cliff. The driver and four horses were killed.

Paul Wright's Circus made some successful Southern California dates, while RBBB's Red Unit drew small crowds at Terre Haute (Ind.) and the Blue Unit set records on the west coast. Sells & Gray were doing fair in the mid-west and John Strong had rain in Kentucky, while Polack set new attendance records at Pasadena (Calif.) and Circus Vargas took July 4th off.

A cloudburst at Mt. Clemens, Mich. (July 12) destroyed the Circus Vargas big top and it was soon replaced with a solid orange tent. Two Carson & Barnes elephants ran away at Hugo (Okla.) and were not recaptured for two weeks - garnering the show plenty of publicity. The TNT Circus was playing shopping centers, some circus old-timers were honored by Carson & Barnes in Wisconsin, Hoxie was in Pennsylvania and Sells & Gray jumped into Wisconsin, while RBBB's Blue Unit was in Louisiana.

A Bi-Centennial Show, produced by the Methodist Church, played the Southern states with professional acts. Sells & Gray were suffering from a lack of help and Dailey Bros. continued its operation in the north. Kaye Cont'l made its annual jump into Hawaii with good results, while the

The Fisher Bros. Circus played a number of dates in Ohio during the 1975 tour. Pfening Photo.



Fleckles Circus played the Illinois State Fair to big crowds, where Schlitz 40 Horse hitch was also featured.

By September, American shows suddenly became aware of the fact that Canada meant business in regards to its new tax program. There was anxious concern on the part of most show owners as Royal American Shows were raided and their books seized. Soon Ringling-Barnum announced they were cancelling their Canadian tour and a new show was named to play the usual Royal American dates.

The small Schmidt's Circus narrowly escaped a serious flood in North Dakota; Carson & Barnes had ideal weather in Wisconsin and Hunt's Circus announced plans to play a series of benefit dates for a performing arts center in Springfield (Mass.). Franzen Bros. moved into Minnesota and "People" magazine folks were on hand to do a picture story on the show. Clyde Bros. was in Mexico and Charles Bros. was in Maine, both drawing good crowds.

During a performance of the RBBB Blue Unit at Monroe (La.) a girl rider fell from her horse and then it stepped on her ankle, meanwhile a woman trainer at California's Magic Mountain narrowly escaped death when her pet elephant gored her several times.

Circus Kingdom personnel were excited and pleased about their performances in Pennsylvania for Vietnam Refugees and said it was the high point of their tour, while Ringling-Barnum officials were complaining about unions and building contracts - both were accused of wanting too much money.

A South American tour was announced for '76 by the Royal Lipizzan Show; John Strong moved into the mid-west area and the CMB held its annual convention in Peru (Ind.) with dinner at a restaurant that had once been the old circus cat barn. Meanwhile a new show - American Combined Shows - bowed in Oregon, offering carnival and circus features, and Voorheis Bros. was preparing for its annual fall tour.

Most shows were reporting good business, but John Strong continued to announce that business was down. However, RBBB's Blue Unit was packing them in on the west coast, and when officials at Anaheim (Calif.) announced plans for an increased city entertainment tax, RBBB protested loud and long. If the tax is allowed to go into effect, they said, we'll just skip that city next year.

Murray Hill's show was doing OK in the mid-west, while Carson & Barnes got caught on a dirt lot in a rain storm that turned the area into a sea of mud. Michigan adopted stiff new laws governing promotional activities, which now requires licenses, bonds and a guarantee that the major share of the funds received will go to the charity involved.

Garden Bros. reported a successful season at its closing engagement, but admitted profits were down. George Hamid resigned from his long-time position as head of the Steel Pier, and after a brief lay-off the George Matthews Circus was going again and drew nice crowds, despite

rain and cold weather. Soon they'd be in West Virginia, then were shut down for the season and reports indicated the year wasn't one of their best. The equipment was stored in Ohio, ready for an early spring opening on the east coast.

The circus world was stunned by reports that Emma Duke and Janice Ratcliff had been shot and killed by a circus worker during a robbery of their Donna (Texas) home. The man was captured and charged with two counts of murder and eventually was sentenced to life in the state prison.

Ringling-Barnum's Blue Unit was the first show to play the huge Super Dome at New Orleans (La.) and never quite filled the seating area. Local columnists had fun belittling the show and suggested they would be better off playing a smaller building. The news media in Chicago also razed the show, for an all too short circus parade, when there had been every indication a big parade was scheduled for the Windy City. RBBB personnel on the Red Unit playing at Denver helped local officials dedicate a park on ground that had once been owned by P. T. Barnum, who originally planned to winter his show there.

The Emmett Kelly, Jr. Circus continued to jump back and forth across the country and drew small crowds in California, but as soon as John Strong's show returned to that state business picked up. Both TNT and Royal Hanneford reported they had good years and the New York area dates for Don Francisco's show were also good ones.

Well-known circus performer John Parker was killed when his swaypole broke during a performance at the Florence (S.C.) fair on Oct. 6th and he was thrown to the ground. It was to have been his last performance before retiring. Wallace & Rogers were fighting mud and rain in California, the Stebbing's Circus drew well and plans were announced for a winter tour of the Soviet Circus in the east.

Shrine Circus committees met at Indianapolis (Ind.) to discuss their special problems, while plans were announced for the appearance of two wild west shows in '76, both inspired by the coming Bi-Centennial. Unofficial reports indicated that Chicago might be the scene of an old-fashioned circus parade next July 4th, using Circus World Museum wagons, much to the delight of fans everywhere.

A confusing state of affairs developed over who had the rights to the King Bros. title when Pete Cristiani and Floyd King joined forces and announced they would take out the Cristiani-King Bros. circus in 1976. Threats of suits and countersuits were heard, but no positive word had been released by the end of the year. At least two other shows were planned for '76 - Hoxie's Great American Circus and then Lewis Bros., which would be operated solely by John Lewis, after a long association with Hoxie Tucker.

A suit against the Paul Miller Circus, which had been dragged through the courts since 1962 was settled late in the year when a judgement against the show was handed down by a Texas judge. Meanwhile, Oregon



Lewis Bros. Circus, the number two unit of the Hoxie Tucker organization, was beautifully painted for the 1975 season. Pfening Photo.

officials were investigation what they called corrupt promotional practices by a circus and its sponsor in that state.

On the west coast the USA Nat'l Circus was named to produce San Francisco's PAL Circus for the third year, and in Florida Circus World Park was shutting down for remodeling. Observers wondered why the park would shut down during the tourist season and many speculated that it would never reopen. Late in the year, Mattel announced they were providing \$3.5 million for remodeling at the park to insure its second debut in time for Easter.

Wallace & Rogers signed to appear at Lion Country Safari Park in Southern California for the winter season, while Polack had its elephants leased out to "Old Chicago" Mall. John Strong planned to tour three Christmas shows in December and Ringling-Barnum brought a European bear act over as the feature act for their Blue Unit. Meanwhile, many smaller shows continued to tour despite the lateness of the year.

TV crews joined the Kaye Cont'l Circus in the mid-west and the PAL Circus in San Francisco, to film circus programs for 1976 viewing. The show made on the Kaye circus was called a pilot for a possible circus regular with Phyllis Diller, while the show made on the PAL Circus was a circus story for the Streets of San Francisco show.

By the time the year came to an end a new show - Circus Galaxy - was scheduled for an early '76 debut and rumors were running wild about a possible sale of all

The elephant herd of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus is pictured at the 1975 Columbus, Ohio, stand. Pfening Photo.



three Beatty-Cole shows. There was no positive word yet as to what would happen to the King title, while the McDonald's Hamburger firm was negotiating for the purchase of Fisher Bros. Circus, and previous plans for the debut of Oscanian Bros. Circus were cancelled.

What was called a sale, and then loudly denied by all parties, was said by some to be a merger of convenience between Clyde Bros. and Carden-Johnson for 1976. Both shows would play their separate routes and keep their names, but would come together for large dates and would use the same promotional teams and in some cases switch dates.

A variety of magic, vaude-type and circus shows were making Holiday dates, and Lewis Bros. was said to be ready for an early opening in April. Then once again the show world was stunned when aerialist Jimmy Troy fell from his trapeze during a show at "Old Chicago" and was killed instantly.

Certainly 1975 was a most peculiar year. Inflation continued to push prices ever upward and unemployment remained high throughout most of the country. Some areas were hurt badly, while other sections apparently suffered no bad effects at all. It seemed that those who had money were hanging onto it, while those who had none were willing to spend what little they had left.

Probably the '75 season was best described by Murray Hill, who said, "This was a complicated year with many confusing factors. It was certainly a lopsided and unusual season."

Among the show folks who died during the year were: Lawrence Higgins, Agnes Kelly, Don Kirby, Volney Phifer, Samuel Warren, Vickie King, Slivers Madison, Lucius Rich, Ray Rodman, Horace Murphy, Bill Dedrick, Juanita Deisler, Ted Hamilton, Ted Aragon, Ray Swann, Bill Waite, Forrest



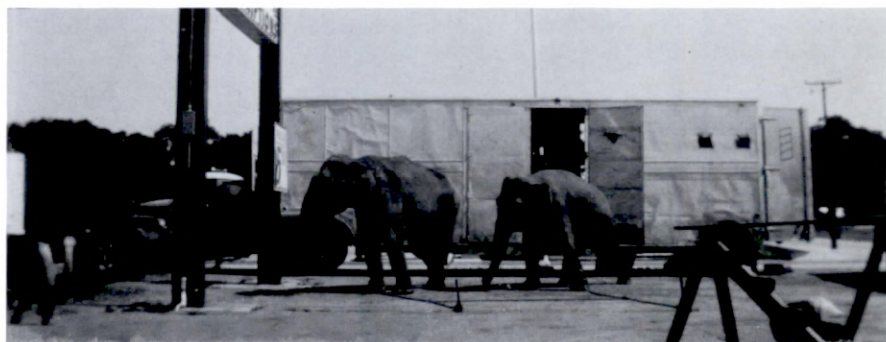
Wilson, George Cook, Lamott Dodson, Pauline Freeman, Piotr Kalinowski, Jackie Wells, Ralph Smoot, Tillie Keys, George Emery, John Brannock, Gilda, William Pickard, Sr., William Grzeszczyszyn, Wilfred Curtis, James Robinson, Gladys King, Edward Maynard, Bert Nelson, George Lerch, Ray McAndrews, Eva King, Birdie Barker, Leonard Hayes, John Davis, Robert Burns, Henrietta Winn, Emmett Ronstrom, Gene Lewis, Jessie Smith, Charles Simpson, Gary Hoover, Roger Barnes, Howard King, Vincent Carey, Homer Denny, Hugo Zucchini, W. Reed Browning, Sr., Stella Loyal, Jimmy Troy, Jake Gibbs, Lawrence Welsh, Oscar Konyot, Emma Duke, Janice Ratcliff, Lou Watson and Phil Bonta.

Major Shows on Tour in 1975—

Americana Combined Shows - canvas
Beatty-Cole Bros. - canvas
Big John Strong - canvas
Carden-Johnson Circus - canvas
Carson & Barnes - canvas
Hubert Castle Circus - indoor
Charles Bros. Circus - canvas
Circo Panamericano - indoor
Circus Kingdom - canvas
Circus Kirk - canvas
Circus Vargas - canvas
Clyde Bros. - indoor
Cole All Star Circus - canvas
Dailey Bros. Circus - canvas
De Wayne Bros. - canvas
Fisher Bros. Circus - canvas
Fleckles Int'l - indoor
Franzen Bros. - canvas
Garden Bros. - indoor
Garden Int'l - indoor
Gatti-Charles - indoor
George-Matthews - canvas
Great American Bicentennial - indoor
Hamid-Morton - indoor
Hanneford Circus (Tommy) - indoor
Hanneford Family Circus (George) - canvas

The Sells & Gray Circus, one of the three Acme Circus organization shows, is pictured on the lot in Janesville, Wis., in 1975. Gordon Brown Photo.

Happytime Circus - canvas
Harold Bros. - indoors
Hills Great American - indoor
Hippodrome Int'l - indoor
Hoxie Bros. - canvas
Hubler Int'l - indoor



Elephants alongside semi on Mid America Circus lot at McCook, Nebr., June 19, 1975. This semi hauled all of the show's stock which included 2 elephants, 1 horse, 7 ponies, 1 llama, 2 sheep, and 1 midget goat. Show didn't use the big top that day. Photo by Joe Fleming.

Hunts Circus - canvas
Int'l All Star - indoor
Wm. Kay Circus - indoor
Emmett Kelly, Jr. - indoor

The Oscarian Bros. Circus did not tour in 1975, however the family appeared with the Carson & Barnes Circus during the season. This photo was taken on the Carson & Barnes lot. Pfening Photo.



King Bros. - canvas
M & M Circus - canvas
Mid America - canvas
Olympic Int'l - indoor
Pan American Circus - indoor
Patterson Bros. - indoor
Polack Bros. - indoor
Ringling-Barnum - indoor
Roberts Bros. - canvas
Royal Bros. - canvas
Royal European - canvas

Royal Wild West - canvas
Royson Bros. - canvas
Rudy Bros. - indoor/canvas
Russell Bros. - indoor
Sells & Gray - canvas
TNT & Royal Olympic - indoor
USA National - indoor
Voorheis Bros. - indoor
Wallenda-Leontini - indoor
Wenatchee Youth - indoor

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SPECIAL BICENTENNIAL EDITION

ONE SHEET

By Stuart Thayer

With the nation's Bicentennial upon us we would like to go back two hundred years and discuss the circus as it was in 1776. Unfortunately, this is not possible, since the circus had not been established in this country at that time. And if it were, it wouldn't have been operating because of the prohibition placed upon public amusements by the Continental Congress for duration of the war.

However, in the Centennial year of 1876 the circus in America was eighty-three years old and we are able to chronicle its activity during that year of national celebration. Interestingly, the United States in 1876 was in the throes of an economic slump, just as we are in 1976. The panic of 1873, brought about by the inflationary effects of the cost of the Civil War, lasted until 1880. In the circus business the year 1938 is generally considered the most disastrous year of all time, but this writer thinks that an examination of show business in 1875 would reveal it to be worse. Half of the field shows that went out in the spring of 1875 (16 of 39) did not finish the season or were unable to leave quarters in 1876. Of those that did survive only a few made money.

There was little enthusiasm for the year 1876 in any business, but showmen, the most optimistic of all entrepreneurs, had no choice but to test the public mood for there was no other way of finding out if tickets could be sold.

The focus of the national celebration in 1876 was the Centennial Exhibition in Fairmount Park in Philadelphia. There was no circus concession in the park itself, but A. A. Tubbs and Company erected a one hundred by one hundred-sixty foot pavilion amphitheatre (board walls, canvas roof) at Broad and Callowhill Streets in the northern part of town. They advertised it as the American and European Equestrian Aggregation and offered a strong company which included the Aymar, Stokes and Derious family troupes. It seems that even the accomplished equestrians could not draw against the technological wonders of a world's fair. The amphitheatre opened on April 29 for a projected six months, but lasted just a month, closing May 29. It was reopened on June 14 as the Golden City Circus by S. J. Horne of San Francisco. We know no more about it, but can assume that if it had been a success some word of it would have survived.

Other early-season field shows may have cut into Tubbs' Philadelphia audience. Adam Forepaugh was at Broad and Columbia the week of April 17; at 11th and Wharton on the 25th and 26th and at 46th and Lancaster the 27th and 28th. Thus the townspeople had ten days of circus offered to them before Tubbs opened. Then John (Pogey) O'Brien put his tents up adjoining Fairmount Park for the week of May 1. After that he spent the week of the 8th at three separate downtown locations. It may be no wonder that the amphitheatre closed for lack of patronage.

Three circuses closed their season in the month of June. J. E. Warner's Great Show, travelling in wagons, opened in Jackson, Michigan on May 1, adjusted admissions to twenty-five cents on May 28 and folded in Tuscola, Illinois on June 28. O. P. Hart's National Circus collapsed on June 14 in Shamokin, Pennsylvania. The employees took over the equipment (no doubt in lieu of unpaid salaries) and retitled it the London Pavilion Show. They toured Pennsylvania and Virginia and were in Halifax, North Carolina on October 20, so they seem to have made a go of it. Avery Smith and J. J. Nathans had what they called Howes and Cushing's Circus on the road in 1876. It went no further than a Fall River, Massachusetts date on June 30. Six weeks salaries were owed when this concern died.

Lewis B. Lent and James M. French took a thirty-car circus out of Detroit on May 8 under their own names, the equipment of which belonged to a show printer named Torrey. The printer may have owned the goods because of Lent's unpaid paper bill of 1875. They had played principally in Wisconsin by July 8 when French went home with his menagerie. George W. DeHaven, the privilege man, took over from French, but to no avail and the tent was lowered for the last time in Van Wert, Ohio on July 15.

As an aside I would venture to guess that George W. DeHaven stepped into the management of more shows in mid-season than any

other man in circus history. He was a salvage expert, it appears. I await with interest someone's biography of him.

On July 20, somewhere in Arkansas, Mabie's Great London Menagerie and Buckley's Equestrian Exhibition out of Delavan, Wisconsin, gave their last performance of 1876.

In October two men named Dan suffered misfortune. Dan Rice's stock went under the auctioneer's hammer on October 3 in Ashland, Kentucky and Dan Castello's Centennial Menagerie and Circus closed in Joplin, Missouri October 16.

There must have been other ships that sank. We don't know yet what happened to Stickney's Calisthetic Exhibition, for instance. And, though they were out well into January, 1877, Howe's London Circus was attached by unpaid employees in that month in Augusta, Georgia.

So much for failures a hundred seasons ago. The well-managed shows, as usual, went into the barn with enough to start the new season. Forepaugh, Barnum, Sells Brothers, Burr Robbins, John Robinson, Van Amburgh survived 1876 and other poor seasons as well. Cooper and Bailey turned their back on America, spending most of the Centennial in Australia.

As we said, the country did not fully recover from the panic of 1873 until 1880. The circus seasons of 1877 and 1878 were, like 1876, dull ones for profit. Eighteen seventy-nine was better and 1880 ushered in the golden age.

Other parallels exist for the man who needs them. In addition to our present economic ills we have had bruises to our national esteem of late, in the inquiries into the CIA and the FBI. In 1876 as he was touring the Philadelphia Exposition Ulysses S. Grant was informed of what was taken to be a national tragedy, the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

When I began this column several years ago, it was my intention to review books concerning the circus as well as to write these historical tid-bits too short for regular articles. I have not been able to review any books thus far, as nothing has been published that I thought merited discussion. However, I have recently been presented with a copy of Fred Powledge's book Mud Show: A Circus Season (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, New York, 1975) and I recommend it to anyone, circus buff or no.

It is not history, though it someday will be, I'm sure, because of the examination of what a circus means to the people who work on one and what those people see as their own place in it. Except for Marcello Truzzi's work there has been little examination of the sociological implications of circus organization and the lives of troupers and this volume will add to that knowledge.

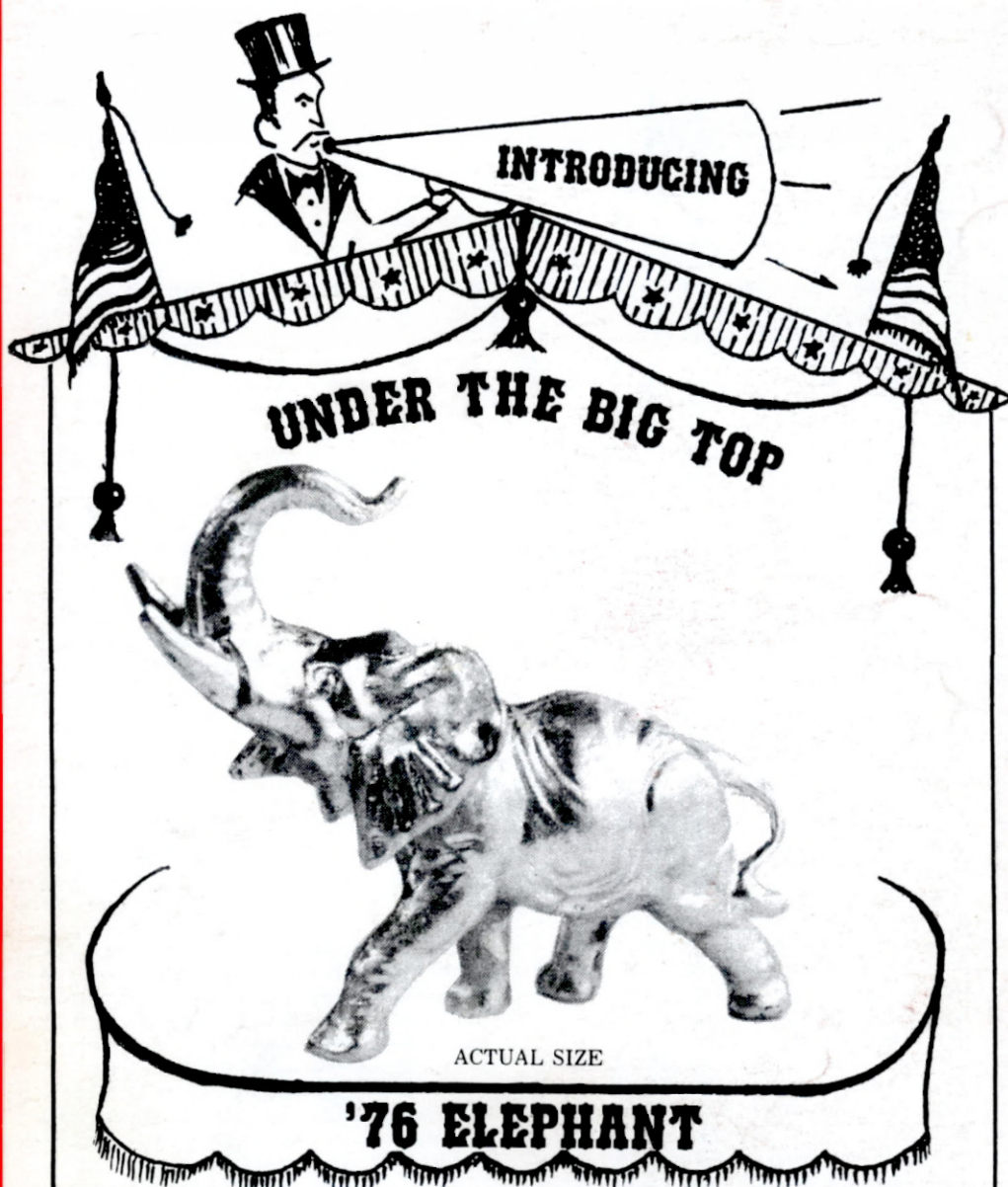
The author spent some time in 1974 with Hoxie Brother's Circus and interviewed and watched the various members of the organization over the season's course and his work reads exactly as one thinks it should. It is journalism at it's best reach.

Some years ago Edward Hoaglund wrote a novel about life with a modern circus titled Cat Man which was very impressive, though depressing in its cataloguing of the desperate lives lived by the working men on shows. This book of Powledge's reveals that time has made no dent in those wretched existences. In the pages of such journals as Bandwagon and White Tops there appears so much romanticism about circuses and circus lives that one forgets that for the greater part of the existence of the genre it has received its supportive muscle from men who by any standards are societal rejects.

As for the performers, two of them stand out, Bert Pettus and Lucio Cristiani. They don't stand out from the others delineated in the book, but they emerge as professionals. Bert Pettus, as everyone knows, has been at it for a long time. He has seen and heard a lot and remembers most of it. He was taught correctly and in this book it is apparent that he longs for other times. The picture of him standing patiently at the backdoor two acts ahead of his own is marvelous. And when an accident occurs and he runs his bulls in to occupy the crowd, you see the reason for what he does, almost as in a novel.

Lucio Cristiani is a professional, too, but in a different way from Bert Pettus. To be a Cristiani is to be exposed to circus life and though he is presented as a man who sees beyond the parameters of being a circus performer he is totally devoted to it.

If I were to draw parallels I would say that Bert Pettus resembles the regular army sergeant of fable and legend; Lucio Cristiani a cavalry officer of the old tradition.



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